

My dear ^{Dr.} Rita & Dr. Mohan,
With MATA'S blessings and
my good wishes.

Oct 3, 2005

Tirath for

Tirath

an extraordinary life

through extraordinary times in

Kashmir

Bhim Sen Soi

Em. of Kashmiri Pandits
By. C. L. Koul

1253 Sector D Pocket 1 Vasant
Kang New Delhi - 110070
46078492

Socia. cultural and Religious traditions of
Kashmiri pandits

By. Pooja Raina Sadhaka

PC + Varun@Yahoo - com

Nec Roh - inc 550 ~~Kashmir~~ Barnesley

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e-mailed to tirathramamla@yahoo.com

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शरणागतदीनार्तपरित्राणपरायणे ।
सर्वस्यार्तिहरे देवि नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Refuge of the downtrodden,
Protector of those in pain,
Remover of all ills, a great Goddess,
I bow before you, I pray.

With the blessings of Mata Vaishno Devi

This book is a gift
for Tirath Ram Amla's great grand children

Rishiv and Tarika Khattar

Vedaa Kapur

Lila and Nairah Dhar

Savannah Satya and Uma Iris Dhar

Manya and Kabir Seth

Neel Patnaik

And some more in the future who will cherish and be inspired
by the story of their great-grandfather.

IF

IF YOU can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, not talk too wise;

IF YOU can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;

IF YOU can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them 'Hold on!'

IF YOU can talk with crowds – and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more –
YOU'LL BE A MAN, MY SON!

Rudyard Kipling

Acknowledgements

This book is a loving memento and a 93rd birthday gift to a man who has touched many, many lives. We (the family) took a lot of time to decide whether it should be a biography or a mere tribute. Could we get the accuracy, the details, the poignancy, the triumphs, in either? Although the man himself had led a life of tremendous self-effacing humility, since this book was being put together by those who knew him well, couldn't it afford to be a more immodest tome? The facts of his life do defy modesty. How could one do justice to it? Who would write it? Did one need an editor? We all agonised over this and collectively reached a conclusion.

This is a memoir - an unabashed tribute. Memories, incidents from an incredible life told by many people. Publishers showed great interest but the family was unflinching in its desire to keep this story private. It's for US and for HIM and for those who love him and care about him and not really for the public at large. Whoever is truly interested can naturally pick up a copy from us.

The book is written mainly by his oldest and dearest friend, Lala Bhim Sen Soi. I cannot even begin to comment on this unbelievable friendship, which spans over 80 years. Uncle Bhim Sen is probably the most content and unselfish man the world has known and while Nana's chapter on him (at the end of the book) will shed more light on their relationship, all we can say is that this is a most rare friendship and he is the most incredible friend one could wish for. A friend who has been devoted to Nana almost all his life.

A constant companion in Muzaffarabad and in college, Uncle Bhim Sen also came to his assistance when he really needed it most and ran Nana's business in Jammu for many years. Uncle, along with Nana's

niece Dr. Veena Amla, now looks after the day-to-day working of the Tirath Ram Satya Devi Charitable Trust, which is doing notable work in Jammu. He has spent innumerable hours writing this book despite his fading eyesight, holding a magnifying glass to read. Uncomplaining, constantly innovating and patiently recording his friend's comments while digging into his own, much sharper, memory bank. We cannot ever thank him enough!

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Renuka Narayanan who rescued this home crafted memoir with the sheer beauty of her vocabulary. She spent hours patiently with the two grand old men and has been able to retain the purity of their experiences and the flavour of that era. We cannot thank her enough either.

We would like to express our gratitude to Nana's numerous friends, colleagues and well-wishers, who wrote such magnificent letters and tributes. We want you all to know how much these mean to him in the twilight of his life. Special thanks to his dear friends Mr. D D Thakur and Justice Tirath Singh Thakur who so patiently helped him get his thoughts together and are a great source of strength to him.

Amongst the family, his son-in-law, Vijay Dhar, has encapsulated the family's thoughts eloquently in his chapter on Nana and especially helped Uncle with the chapters on Kashmir and the editing. His daughters, Vijaylakshmi and Kiran and son Krishan have written the affectionate chapter on their parents as well as provided a nostalgic glimpse into their growing-up years and the enduring friendships that their amazing father built. The family has helped amend and add lines over a couple of hasty readings and his grandson Vikas Dhar especially, has helped in editing. His great grandson Rishiv Khattar, too helped write some of the early childhood chapters and helped us in defining the structure of the book.

His dedicated assistant, Ramesh Goswami, spent thousands of patient hours collecting information. My terrific team of Yoginder Singhji, Dipika, Pramuch and especially Mukta with her team, helped in rushing this book to the press in record time. The entire family peered over hundreds of photographs to help select the most appropriate ones (and of course, his favourites) that show glimpses of the many phases of his life.

This book is an affectionate tribute to an extraordinary man and will shed light not only on a life of utter conviction and self-confidence, but on a love story of epic proportions. It provides an insider's account of some of the most interesting years in the history of Kashmir and of a business empire built through sheer grit and incredible vision.

One regret that Uncle Bhim Sen, Renuka and all of us share is that we should have started this work a decade ago. Time has made many fascinating nuggets of Nana's life fade from his memory. However, we are sure that the ones whose lives he has touched do remember them. We apologise to the many who deserved to but do not feature in this book due to the paucity of time since we are all racing towards a release in less than a fortnight. We apologise also for not being able to do full justice to an incredible story. However, this book shall hopefully help his great-grandchildren know him better...

On behalf of the entire family,

Rohit Khattar

New Delhi, September 2005

Today - The 93rd Year

He is going to be 93 soon. Looking at his strong, non-wrinkled face he could be mistaken for a 70 year old. Though his gait is slower now, he still retains the spirit of his youth and the twinkle in his eyes. The sheer strength of his personality creates a physical aura around him.

His day begins at 6:15 a.m. His devoted helper, Durga Das, assists him in picking out the clothes for the day. The shaving session itself is a forty-minute chore of perfection followed by one hour in the Central Park, Maharani Bagh, where he takes several rounds (far too many for his age) and then sits on the bench and meditates. His loyal driver, Shambhu, and chowkidar, Pawan, stand by while he prays, completely enraptured in his devotion to Mata Vaishno Devi.

This is followed by a short nap when he returns home. His patient assistant, Ramesh Goswami, is at his door at 10:00 a.m. going over the day's appointments: people to telephone, friends to call upon, letters to dictate. Ramesh's most important chore before departing is to mark out the films playing on various TV channels in the evening. The greatest disappointment is if there is no Amitabh Bachchan film on. A greater dilemma for Mr. Bachchan's oldest fan is when there is more than one Amitabh film on different channels at the same time, leading to a debate on which one to see again.

If Lala Bhim Sen is in town, they will spend the entire morning together recalling stories from their past. If not, he makes do with a long telephone call to his old friend and of course to numerous members of the family.

Most of the afternoon he sits alone under a big collage of photographs - his memory wall. He patiently goes through old notes and files and regales us nostalgically with anecdotes - the older memories much sharper than recent ones; names and years taking immense effort but Urdu poetry flowing through with ease. His wife and companion of almost seven decades sits patiently by his side, one eye on the TV and one on her beloved husband...

Come what may, the evening walk will not be missed either. The other residents of Maharani Bagh walking in the park only see an old man who, with great gusto, wishes them either *Jai Mata Di*, *Salaam Aleikum* or *Sat Sri Akaal* when they pass him. None of them know that this man has led a life which very few of us will even be able to dream of - a life that began on the day of Baisakhi 1913 in Muzaffarabad. A life that could be termed quite 'extraordinary' for lack of a better adjective...

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Part - I

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Om Ganeshaya Namaha

1

Childhood

The incredibly adventurous life of Tirath Ram Amla aptly began after a pilgrimage, itself an act of great adventure in the old days. His parents, Thakar Dass and Arni Devi, had ventured forth on the customary yatra to the holy towns of Hardwar and Rishikesh on the river Ganga, followed by a circuit of the Char Dham or Four Holy Abodes in the Himalayas – Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath. While the last two were important mountain shrines and the middle two were the glacial mouths of two major sacred rivers, the first two were a magnet for all devout Hindus at which to keep their tryst with the wellspring of their faith and affirm their cultural connection with their land and people.

As if blessed doubly by the soul-cleansing vibrations of such a journey, a son was born to the couple on the holy day of Baisakhi (April 13), 1913, an ancient festival celebrated as the New Year across the Indian sub-continent and South-east Asia. The felicitous name of Tirath (pilgrimage) was bestowed on the newborn. Such was the social integration of those times that these events occurred naturally and pleasantly in the Muslim-majority town of Muzaffarabad in the Kashmir Valley, about 187 km away from the city of Srinagar, in its rural hinterland.

The former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was then spread over 2,22,236 sq km. Today, 45% of this is administered by India (1,01,387 sq km). Pakistan occupies 35.1% (78,114 sq km) and gifted 5, 180 sq km (2.33%) to China, an area called Shaksgam. China, on its own initiative, occupied 37,555 sq km (16.9%) in the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh. Pakistan calls its occupied territory 'Azad Kashmir' or Free Kashmir, bluntly termed Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) in India. Muzaffarabad, where Tirath was born, is today the capital of POK with a population of nearly 100,000. But until as late as the 1950s, it was a very small town with a population of less than 5,000, a staging post, no more, between the green valleys of the rivers Jhelum and Kishan Ganga.

Founded by Sultan Muzaffar Khan of the Bamba warrior tribe in 1662, Muzaffarabad is built at 2,250 feet in a wooded, hill-ringed valley at the confluence of the two rivers, above the left bank of the Kishan Ganga. Curiously, though it is part of Kashmir, there are no Kashmiri-speaking villages in the region. The languages are Dogri, Gojri and Punjabi.

In this eclectic civilisational potpourri, the Amlas were of Khatri or Punjabi trader stock, better known by surnames like Verma, Tandon, Suri and Kapoor. They sold the three main herbal ingredients of the Ayurvedic medicine trade, *amla*, *harar* and *bheda*, of which the first became a clan suffix. Initially bashful about this surname, members of the extended family shied away from it, but in later years, when Tirath became a potent persona in business and politics, the name became eminently respectable, even coveted.

Over the years, the Amla family gradually took up the cloth trade and money-lending. Borrowers from Muzaffarabad and around would buy clothes on credit and repay with cattle or agri-produce. Male pre-eminence was a given in a Hindu joint family. Men decided things and women were expected to carry out orders and be of service without complaint. The men ate first, waited on by the women of the house in the kitchen itself. They would sit in a row on floor mats with a low wooden table called *chowki* in front of each, on which individual *thalis* (plates) would be placed, while a convoy of hot rotis arrived fresh off the griddle.

In this tight, traditional social structure, Tirath's importance was assured as a male child, though he was the eighth and last child of his parents, with three sisters and four brothers elder to him. Of these, only his sister Durga Devi, who lives in Jammu, is alive to share memories of those long-ago autumns. While his sister Mudo died a natural death, the third sister, Janki Devi, along with scores of other Hindu women, leapt to her death in the Kishan Ganga, to escape dishonour from Hazara tribal raiders in 1947. Tirath's family lost seven members on that horrific day, which is detailed further in Chapter 8.

His four elder brothers – Lachhman Das, Bishan Das, Gian Chand and Hari Chand – have all passed on, living variously to ripe old ages of 84 to 98. The fate of Lala Gian Chand, however, endures as family folklore. This brother was left behind by chance at Muzaffarabad and could not be repatriated after Partition in 1947. Again, I write about this later in chapter 8.

But long before these events unfurled, the Amla family was struck a heavy blow. At the age of just five, Tirath lost his mother, Arni Devi. She hailed from a Tandon family of money-lenders in Hatia, a small township eight miles from Muzaffarabad, and as per custom, her name was changed after marriage, in her case, to ‘Amaravati’. Arni Devi was tall and dusky and, as remembered yet across the long decades, “a very good person”. Such was her benign and auspicious aura that whenever somebody embarked on a journey, they would ask her to stand at the door as a happy augur.

To Tirath, however, the tragedy remains a distant memory of wailing and mourning in the house. To distract his baby brother, Gian Chand took Tirath to the bazaar and fed him sweets. He was taken aback, though, when the little boy innocently linked events and asked when “Amma” would die again, so that more sweets might be had.

For the next two years, Tirath was raised by Parmeshwari Devi, his second-eldest sister-in-law, wife to Lala Bishen Das. At seven, however, he was admitted into Muzaffarabad’s only haven of youthful learning, the Government Middle School, and passed into the direct care of his father, Lala Thakar Dass. The father would tenderly pat his son to sleep at night and take him about on daily chores. Most importantly, Tirath imbibed a value system from his father through anecdote and example, a time-honoured system of cultural and moral education that is classically known as “lakshya pravaha” (the flow of precept) and “lakhshana pravaha” (the flow of example).

An instance Tirath recalls as vividly as though it happened the other day: Across India, a bath by the river is never just “*nahana*” (to bathe); it is always *nahana-dhona* (to bathe-and-wash-clothes). Accordingly, father and son would sit to scrub their clothes by the Kishan Ganga. One day, in a fit of childish pique, Tirath asked his father why they had to submit to this tiresome task. Why couldn’t a *dhobhi* (washerman) do their clothes, as arranged for his younger cousin Ram Lal? Putting aside the shirt he was then washing, Lala Thakar Dass spoke gently to Tirath about the dignity of labour and the importance of being “hands-on” in any project.

Though he was only seven then, Tirath still remembers the thrill of recognition that shot through him when this truth was uttered. He understood that his father was trying to prepare him to deal with whatever life might bring. Thereafter, Tirath took good care to pay attention when his father spoke about anything, secretly delighting in the indirect messages subtly given through seemingly casual talk.

Meanwhile, there was a first-time Amla family experience to savour, entirely his own - school.

School

Tirath was the first in his family to step into an educational institute. His brothers, though literate, had had little schooling. Tirath, however, had a splendid time at Government Middle School.

Muzaffarabad, as the headquarters, prided itself on having the only middle school in the whole district. Located at the edge of town, the school was housed in a well-built, single-storied E-shaped building with a corrugated steel-sheeting roof. Western wear was not common, though no teacher or student ever came to school bareheaded, taking care to respectfully wear safas, turbans or skullcaps to the house of learning.

The playground drew Tirath and his schoolmates with marbles and hopscotch (called *cheeku dama*), football and occasionally hockey, too. Tirath was quite accomplished in and fond of football which was more popular since hockey sticks were considered expensive. With characteristic Indian ingenuity, however, many boys did play hockey, using stout branches with curved ends in lieu of sticks.

Every year at *Saeen Saheli da Mela*, the local fair held in memory of a Muslim saint, a football match would be played between the local team and their counterparts from the neighbouring North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). This match would draw huge crowds from the town and surrounding countryside, as much for the football as for the other sporting highlight of the event, tent pegging, called *neza bazi*, in which a horseman charged down a course, spear in hand, and lifted up a wooden peg with the spear.

However, it was *gatka* and swordplay that caught Tirath's fancy. Gatka was played with a bamboo stick and was a reasonably safe sport. One day, however, despite there being a wedding in the house, Tirath decided to practice swordplay with a real sword. But the room he hid himself away in was too small for the long

leap and elaborate twirl of the sword. A wrong move led to a deep cut in the knee which took quite some time to heal.

Tirath's teachers were in general, a dedicated lot who took keen and personal interest in each student (all of seven, in Tirath's first class). Corporal punishment was common and a few teachers were notorious for their cruel ways. The towering Puran Chand Bhabra of Jammu, was particularly terrifying. On the flimsiest excuse, he would haul a boy off the ground and dangle his hapless victim upside down in the air for a good, long spell, by his ankles.

Another tyrant, Master Srikanth, was a great stickler for correct posture in the classroom. His little peculiarity was to deliver a good, hard kick in the back to slouchers. Perhaps it was this early fear of a sudden hard kick that stood Tirath's spine in good stead through the many decades that followed.

Yet another teacher, a Muzaffarabadi, was nicknamed "*Naswari Maulvi*", for the simple reason that he was always clad head-to-foot in snuff-coloured clothes besides actually inhaling snuff. The maulvi had patented a most exceptional and lucrative teaching technique. For instance, he would announce some fine morning that the next day he would teach the boys how to grow potatoes or hatch eggs. Every student was required to bring a few potatoes or a couple of eggs to class, "for better understanding of the subject". The maulvi would "teach" only at critical intervals between supplies.

Tirath and his classmates found another teacher most interesting. This gentleman was a patriot with intense hatred for the English who held India in bondage at the time. He often led the whole class in mock raids upon the "English" stronghold represented by another classroom full of unsuspecting students - an activity which, of course, the attackers enjoyed a great deal. Once, he disclosed in great confidence a "brilliant idea" to finish off Great Britain, an idea he claimed he had secretly been working on for a long time: he would put a huge disc in orbit around the earth, which would permanently cut off sunlight to Great Britain!

These vignettes by no means imply that all of Muzaffarabad's teachers were tyrannical, greedy or mildly insane. As a matter of fact most of them were extremely sincere and wonderful teachers whom Tirath honoured as gurus with deepest respect.

In fact, the *Guru-Shishya* tradition of yore was still in vogue and Tirath, like other students, found immense pleasure and pride in serving his teachers. A favourite was Master Tara Chand of Sopore, who taught math. Tirath would go to his house every day to religiously prepare his hookah and place its pipe near the teacher's bed while he was still asleep. The first thing Master Tara Chand would do upon waking was to puff at the hookah so assiduously prepared by his pupil. Students would even wash their teachers' used dishes, performing these chores out of respect and love for their teachers, not out of fear or with any ulterior motive.

However, every student had a nemesis in the form of either mathematics, Urdu or English. Tirath's Achilles' heel was Urdu. No matter how hard he tried he just couldn't master the language beyond a point. To pass the examination he decided to sit close to his friend Abdul Hamid Khan, who was good at Urdu. But luck was not on Tirath's side that day and sensing foul play, Master Tara Chand changed his favourite student's seat. Removed from Abdul Hamid's side, Tirath knew he was bound to fail in Urdu. Unable to accept what seemed a great betrayal by a teacher in whom he had invested so much time and effort, Tirath bolted in rage from class, resolved to dash himself to death in the foaming Kishan Ganga.

Naturally, Master Tara Chand had no idea that his student had run away to kill himself. Shocked by his behaviour, he immediately despatched a few likely lads to fetch the desperado back to class. Hauled back, a visibly chagrined Tirath disclosed his mission. Appalled, Master Tara Chand made Tirath see the matter in its right perspective: "For how long will you live the life of a copycat?" he asked gently. That was the end of Tirath's attempts to copy. Master Tara Chand's

influence endures even eight decades later, for though Tirath has forgotten many lessons, his Urdu *shayari* remains with him as a source of great comfort and nostalgia.

Some of Tirath's teachers in this backwater town were scholars who later rose to eminent positions. Maulana Mohammed Syed Masoodi hailing from Lawat, a remote village in Muzaffarabad District, was a literary genius, who taught Urdu. He was amongst the first associates of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah and played a pivotal role in the politics of the state for decades until his tragic assassination by militants in the 1990s. Sheikh Abdullah himself was scheduled to teach at the Muzaffarabad school, but shortly before his tenure could begin, he abandoned government service for politics and led the freedom struggle in Kashmir as its towering leader.

By the time Tirath had passed Class Eight, the Government Middle School at Muzaffarabad had been elevated to the rank of a High School. Tirath was thus amongst the first batch of students who passed their Matriculation examination from there, though they had to go all the way to Srinagar for it, since not one examination centre was to be found in the roughly 187 kms between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar.

The boys left for Srinagar by bus, accompanied by their Urdu teacher, Maulana Masoodi. Arriving at dusk, they were wonderstruck by their first glimpse of huge chinar trees, whose heads seemed to touch the evening sky. The country boys stayed in a rest house called Pratap Bhawan where rooms had been reserved. During their stay in Srinagar, they received the news that an heir had been born to Maharaja Hari Singh in France, leading to great jubilation in the Valley.

The year was 1931 and matriculation meant that at 17, Tirath would leave behind his childhood idyll in Muzaffarabad to become a boarder at the only college in the Valley: SP College, Srinagar.

The College Years

As a student, Tirath was a well-built, ruggedly handsome, well-dressed youngster with high romance in his heart and starry dreams in his eyes. Even in those early days he drew all eyes wherever he happened to be and spread warmth and cheer everywhere.

There were never more than about 20 to 25 students at the college hostel. But this small number hailed from every nook and corner of the state, a few having come all the way from the North West Frontier Province of India (NWFP now a part of Pakistan), while a couple of boys belonged to the remote semi-independent tribal area of Waziristan.

Though widely diverse in culture, language and religion, the crucible of hostel life melted them all into a homogeneous compound and Tirath and all of us hostel-mates lived in the greatest amity and affection.

Chuckles Tirath, though: "For most of us who were just country bumpkins, the move to Srinagar was a quantum leap from the sleepy backwater districts to the hustle -bustle and glitter of the capital city, with its summer swarms of foreign tourists. However it did not take long for us to shrug off the rustic look and don instead, the mantle of urbane and sophisticated young men."

Indeed, my overwhelming image of Tirath from college days is of a dashing swashbuckler of a young man in well-stitched suits, sometimes with a plumed turban!

Srinagar, in the early thirties of the last century, was trying to emerge from its old world shell and taking its first tottering steps towards modernity. A grand, new palace with lush, sprawling lawns had just sprouted on a beautiful site with a stunning

view of Dal Lake. To enhance these charms, a most scenic boulevard had been laid along the lake's eastern bank. Teeming with fish, the deep blue waters of the Dal once covered 22.5 sq km as recorded in the 19th century but have since shrunk to 14.75 sq km. For centuries, locals have legally grown flowers and vegetables on its floating islands, harvesting the Dal of rich crops of white lilies (*pamposh* in Kashmiri), horned water chestnuts (*singhara*) and lotus root (*nadroo*), the last two constituting delicious vegetarian elements of Kashmiri cuisine. The reeds and rushes of the Dal are used to thatch boat roofs and for making handy sieves. Ducks, moor hens, swans, herons and iridescent blue kingfishers ornament the lake, while around its dappled waters soar the protective purple of the Zaberwan mountains. Not surprisingly, summer beckoned droves of tourists from all over the world to Kashmir. They usually stayed in luxuriously appointed houseboats on the Dal, the Jhelum and Naseem Bagh. The only modern hostelry then was Nedou's Hotel, whose European founder had married a local belle.

The valley was free of pollution with the few cars on the roads mostly owned by the Palace. Very few people could claim to be rich but since the cost of living was low, the middle class managed to lead a reasonably satisfied life. Villages and towns retained their old world charm, although Gulmarg and Pahalgam had begun to grow as tourist havens. Behram Pestonjee, a Parsi settler who was to become Tirath's close friend and partner, would one day run the only ski resort at Gulmarg (He fondly tutored Tirath's three children in fork-and-knife etiquette and they recall gazing wide-eyed at the glitterati that thronged the ski resort in their childhood: princes and potentates, stars and millionaires).

Kashmiris customarily wore the traditional woollen *pheran*, the long, loose kurta-like garment which was perfect to ward off the freezing winter cold with, especially when centrally heated by a *kangri*, a rush basket of live coals hidden snugly under the *pheran*, close to the body. However, the effect of this excessive snugness was to render the wearer rather lethargic.

With modernity beginning to nudge the valley, Kashyap Bandhu, a great Kashmiri Pandit reformer of the time, commenced a crusade to persuade his community's conservative ladies to discard the pheran in favour of a dhoti, with the slogan "*pheran chhodo, dhoti pehno!*" (Leave off wearing the pheran, put on a sari). As for masculine attire, the modern European suit had begun its vogue just then in Europe as had striped pajama cloth. The latter found immense favour in Kashmir, to the extent that regardless of its original purpose as sleepwear fabric, it was stitched and worn proudly as daytime suits to college or office.

In this period of slow social transition, Tirath's adventures at college became a talking point in SP College and around town. Tirath and I had gone home to Muzaffarabad for the winter vacation. It had snowed in Muzaffarabad as happened every second or third year.

We were chatting away when word came that a leopard had been driven down by the heavy snow from the high mountains around Muzaffarabad. It had taken shelter in a cave near the old fort on the outskirts of town. We were up in a flash and with Tirath getting hold of a gun from his home, we reached the fort, which was swept by the swift-flowing Kishan Ganga on three sides. The leopard was sighted in a cave located just over a huge rock jutting out of the riverbank.

Says Tirath's nephew Dr. Bansi Lal Amla, another eyewitness to the episode, "Our town, Muzaffarabad, was set in the mountains and surrounded by forests filled with all kinds of wildlife including birds, boars, cheetahs and tigers. It was fertile ground for good hunting. My uncle was considered an ace hunter. His hunting expeditions, full of courage and bravery, were told to us as young children which used to fill us with tremendous excitement and pride. I was once an eyewitness to one such episode when a leopard wandered into our town and

started attacking cattle and people. A few fatalities were reported every day and this caused panic in the town. The forest department felt something had to be done and called upon all hunters to join the hunt. They all felt that without the presence of my Uncle the attempt would be inadequate. Although Uncle was not well that day, he nevertheless rose to the occasion and agreed to lead the hunt."

The cave and rock were already surrounded by curious crowds. Tirath, after wading a few steps through the river, climbed up that slippery rock right below the leopard. He looked about him and concluded that the leopard could get to the rock only by a particular route. He sat himself down coolly on the rock, his gun primed and ready, pointing that way. Disturbed on all sides by the shouting, stone-throwing crowd, the leopard came at Tirath with its jaws wide open. Tirath promptly fired both barrels into its gaping jaw. The leopard fell back into the river. Tirath shouted aloud, "*Mara!*" (I've killed him!) and climbed down after it. But the leopard had some fight left and sprang at Tirath who was badly mangled on his left shoulder. He still carries quite a few tooth marks as a reminder. As the leopard shifted its hold to his biceps, Tirath tightened his grip around its throat in a stranglehold and both rolled down into the river. Fearing if he let go, the leopard would rip his throat, Tirath choked and drowned the animal to death in the river, but not before being clawed all over. Eventually a Sikh driver dragged the dead leopard by its tail out to the dry bank; some people brought wooden poles and ropes and fetched it to Tirath's house. A crowd of people followed to congratulate him.

That night, though Tirath was dosed with a strong draught of alcohol, he slept badly, fighting the leopard in his dreams all night long. Even in those days, he was impulsive in his reactions.

Back in college, we found that Srinagar was in the grip of communal frenzy between Hindus and Muslims. One day a small group of hostellers went to catch the news at Amirakadal, a hub of political and social ferment. They noticed a

band of young Sikhs brandishing their daggers and swords and raising slogans, standing in an open truck in front of the Gurdwara. They were readying to go on a rescue mission: an SOS had been received from the well-known Kak family of Kashmiri Pandits in the locality of Darpura, pleading for immediate relief from Muslim threats.

Before the other college boys could blink, Tirath had jumped on to the moving truck and was gone with the rescue team. Anxious about his safety, the boys remained rooted to the spot and were tremendously relieved when they eventually saw him come back unharmed with the Sikhs and the Kak family.

Again it was Tirath who was instrumental in saving the lives of about a dozen of our college mates. A merry band of SP College hostellers had gone boating on the Dal and somehow got embroiled in an altercation at Gagribal Ghat with a few Hanjis (boatmen on the Dal). Communal riots had broken out again and the city was under curfew. In a matter of seconds, the boys were surrounded by a mob which forced them to sit in a huddle on the Boulevard and refused to let them go. It began to grow dark. Suddenly a maulvi with a flowing white beard appeared on the scene. He exhorted the mob to "finish off" the captives as soon as night fell. One of the boys, Rashid, was badly cut on his forehead with an oar by a Hanji and lay down feigning to be dead. Tirath's friend, Noor Mohammed Khan of Poonch, tried to pacify the mob by reciting the Kalma, but to no avail, since the maulvi had declared them all to be *kafir* (infidels). Somehow, Tirath managed his escape and ran up the steep path leading to the Shankaracharya Temple. A few Hanjis ran after him but he was able to outrun them. He scurried down the hill on the other side and had his friends rescued by the police in the nick of time. Surprisingly the social integration in Kashmir was such in those days that communal incidents like these were few and soon forgotten. Hindus and Muslims lived in great harmony for the better part. Tirath's closest friends at that time (and till

now) have mostly been Muslims with Tirath too usually mistaken for one with his *karakul* hat as an inseparable accessory.

In 1931, the year Tirath and I joined as first year students, S.P. College earned the cachet of being the first to introduce co-education in the valley. The female students were just a handful in number and almost never mingled with the male students. They had been allotted a separate common room to relax in when not attending class. In those days it was a novelty to find girls studying alongside male students. We boys gave them all respect and nobody even dreamt of misbehaving with the girls.

One year, however, a professor from Lahore came to Tirath's college to conduct a practical examination in Physics. He committed the unpardonable indiscretion of misbehaving with some of the female students, who began to weep in mortification. Pandit Shyam Lal, the S.P. College Physics demonstrator, came to know of it and remarked aloud that he wished someone would teach that lot of a professor a sharp lesson in co-ed propriety. That gave us boys tacit license to handle the situation in the way we had already planned.

That very evening a group of us armed with hockey sticks and led by Tirath went to Lal Chowk, Srinagar's town square, where we got hold of the erring professor and dealt him a sound thrashing in full view of the citizenry. The professor apologized for his misbehaviour and promised not to fail anyone in the Physics practical out of spite. He begged us with folded hands not to spread the tale.

Naturally, it was next to impossible to keep such an incident under wraps for long. It was our friend Gurbax Singh who triumphantly narrated the incident to one and all immediately on our return to the hostel. Our college principal, Maulvi Ibrahim, also came to hear about the incident and next morning we were all called to his office to explain the matter. All the other students involved denied it but Tirath owned up at once. When he heard the whole story, the principal was in fact

pleased with us. He duly informed DAV College, Lahore, about the Professor's misbehaviour and got him dismissed from service.

Gurbux Singh has always brimmed with humour and mischief. He was the one to initiate us into imbibing liquor at college, when we were barely in our teens. May God bless him for his forethought for our future enjoyment!

Seventy five years later, Tirath Ram Amla and I have become ardent young men again, recalling the simple code of honour that animated our youth. And when we think of college friends long gone, we cannot help chortling over some unforgettable characters.

I.S. Khan was one such, hailing from Hunza, the northern-most part of Gilgit, bordering China, which was then a part of Jammu & Kashmir. Having left Hunza that once, he never went back to his birthplace again. His entire life was shrouded in mystery and so was the source that financed his studies at Srinagar. He was very handsome and headstrong and in addition, he could bray like a donkey to perfection. He made use of this remarkable talent very often to wake up the entire hostel irrespective of the hour, just as the mood took him. A couple of new suits every now and then were a clear sign of his having received his stipend from the unknown source and their distress sale a couple of months later on would indicate his having exhausted his funds. He had but one burning ambition – to migrate somehow to England. Fortunately for him, he did so soon after graduation, was called to the Bar and married an Englishwoman. He died young and lies buried in the land of his dreams. Says Tirath, "It is sad to reflect that he died so young, when the people of Hunza, his birthplace, rejoice in the longest human lifespans of any region in the world."

Another friend, Maulvi Najibullah, also from Gilgit, died very young, too, by jumping into the Indus in a moment of depression. He earned notoriety in college with his

suo motu blessing to every sweet-faced, small girl he encountered: "May God bless you and help you grow up – quick!"

Meanwhile, Jasmin Khan of the rugged North West Frontier Province, never passed an exam, yet, like a true Pathan, refused to quit and stood like a rock through successive terms. Once, after an English paper, we asked him how he had handled the "fill in the blanks" section. His reply stunned us with its originality: "I am a devout Muslim and will never commit the blasphemy of attempting to solve such questions, since predicting the unknown is strictly taboo in Islam."

Jasmin was almost outshone however by Zaberdest Khan from the tribal area of North West Waziristan, who was short, with a shaven head. Always clad in salwar-kameez and Pathan *kullah* (cap), he could bend from the waist and touch the ground with his head, knees unbent. One October, his mission in life became to thrash every Gurkha (Nepali) he encountered, all because a Gurkha had pushed him back on Dussehra Day at Srinagar's Khar Maidan, where a grand military parade was to be held in honour of the then Maharaja.

In particular, Tirath made friends with a young student from Ladakh, Sonam Narboo. Recalls Tirath, "I met Sonam Narboo for the first time when he joined S.P. College, Srinagar and we lived together in the hostel. He did not know Hindustani. His first lessons were about abuses, which instead of applying to the other person, applied to him. Narboo was a good swimmer and when he came back from abroad, he was perfect in western manners.

How was I to know then that my dear Narboo's accomplishments over the years would perhaps make him one of the greatest sons Ladakh has produced in its recent history. He laid the foundations of modern Ladakh and it is more or less according to his visionary planning that development in Ladakh proceeds even

today. Born in Ngyachu, a typical Ladakhi family of average means of the sort that was the bedrock of Ladakh society, he grew up with a sound and healthy respect for the benefits of modern education. It was also a society in which the position of education is amply reflected by the local saying, "No Mother's Son Can Be Denied The Throne Of The Depung Monastery If He Has The Qualification" (Depung being one of the three most important monasteries of Buddhism, but the only one in which the top abbot was appointed by the virtue of his learning whereas in the other two monasteries as also in all the numerous smaller ones, the head abbots' seats were reserved for re-incarnates).

Narboo was a gifted student in addition to being hard-working and sincere in his attitude. I remember him saying that while he was at school, he had to read books only once and he could remember the contents with great clarity. It was this facility for learning combined with the virtues of hard work and devotion that propelled this young boy to the position that he attained in later life.

After he graduated from S.P. College, Narboo wanted a degree in Engineering. The British Joint Commissioner was approached for advice. Narboo was instead offered the post of Tehsildar which in those days, as now, was highly prized. If he had accepted, no doubt he would have risen to the top of his profession there too, but perhaps at the expense of the engineering feats that he achieved in his native land and state. Instead he was adamant to the Joint Commissioner that he wanted to be an engineer. So arrangements were made for a scholarship to Sheffield University, UK, for him with help from his Aunt Abitsing.

As it was, the chance to be in the UK for a long period turned him into an unabashed anglophile as it did many before and after him, who came in contact with the British of the World War years: people who faced adversity, impossible odds, despair, defeat at the hands of Hitler's Germany and yet managed to not only survive but also overcome their long years of darkness.

Narboo came back from the UK with his engineering degree, specially commended for his aptitude in Hydraulics. His initial posting was to the Palace of His Highness Hari Singh as the Palace Engineer. Having come back from the UK with only an Engineering Degree and not the proverbial LLD ("landlady's daughter"), friends and relatives in Ladakh set about in earnest to get him married. As at that point of time, the aristocracy was widely respected in Ladakh society, it was immediately apparent that a lady of good standing had to be found for him. So it was that Yangchen Spalzes (Pal) of the Shangara family, which claims lineage from the ancient kings of Ladakh, was chosen. She in turn, was no doubt doubly suited for him and as in a happy match, was the woman behind the man's success.

Around 1948 when the tribal raiders or "Kabailis" were dispatched by Pakistan to snatch Kashmir from India by force, Narboo was instructed by D.P. Dhar, the then Home Minister of J&K, to proceed to Leh to set up an airfield for the beleaguered garrison there. His elder daughter Deskit was then a year old while his son Pinto was still to be born. As he negotiated the formidable Zojila Pass on foot in mid-winter, the thoughts of what the future would hold for his small family were uppermost in his mind. But what had to be done, had to be done, and so the march continued and the airstrip at Leh came into being. Baba Mehr Singh with his Dakotas came in and that's how Ladakh remains part of India today. The Tehsildar may not have been able to do what the engineer could!

A man of great simplicity, though appreciative of the good things in life, Narboo believed firmly in the principles of honesty and integrity and it was this thread that guided him constantly through his life. His foray into politics in later life was also laid on this unlikely foundation, in an arena where duplicity, maneuver and trickery were considered the essential skills of survival and advancement. His final responsibility, when he was recalled by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah from Mongolia (to which he was India's Ambassador) to be the Works Minister of J&K, was

perhaps his most glorious one. As Ambassador, India's crest, bearing the national motto "Satyameva Jayate" figured on his visiting card. While taking on his new assignment as the Works Minister of the State, he glanced at one of his old visiting cards and commented to his son, Pinto "This says 'Truth Shall Prevail'. This is the unshakeable philosophy of our country, that is what it will always be." He then carried on practising the profession he loved so dearly from the highest post of the time and which he had always felt was the way to develop Ladakh, still caught in the medieval period."

Writes Pinto of Tirath's affection for Narboo, "The friendship between my father and 'Chachaji' (Lala Tirath Ram Amla) was to bond them into a closer relationship than biological brotherhood could have endowed. It gave me the opportunity to know Tirath Uncle from as far back as my memory can carry me. In retrospect it was the shared qualities of head and heart that drew these two people together and shot them to the heights that they both attained. Tirath Uncle is a man who has always met life head-on and accepted whatever has been thrown at him as a challenge. It has been a life in which he has hobnobbed with the high and mighty of the land and yet has not hesitated in parting ways with them when he has had a difference of opinion with them despite knowing that they could harm his vast business interests. It was this courage of his convictions which enabled him to earn for himself a seat in the Rajya Sabha for four terms and become one of the most trusted confidantes of Madam Indira Gandhi in our region of J&K. The wise and mature advice that she could always rely upon from him was one of the reasons why Kashmir remained stable for as long as it did. The rest, as we know, is history."

Sonam Narboo's son-in-law, Wangdus Kalon, says, "You meet a man for the first time in your life and after the exchange of pleasantries, he throws a poser point-blank at you: "How much do they pay you as an officer in the Indian Army?"

The concern was genuine and well-intended as I discovered later, since I was to marry his best friend's daughter, Deskit. This was in Assam on a tea estate in the fall of 1973 where my prospective father-in-law, the late Shri Sonam Narboo had persuaded his best friend, Shri Tirath Ram Amla, to accompany him to deliver the final verdict on the potential of the 'prospective' son-in-law. Such was the bonding and mutual trust reposed in each other between these two friends."

Sonam Narboo passed away on February 2, 1980. Tirath got permission to fly his body to his beloved home state and accompanied his body to Leh. He was overwhelmed to see that despite the biting cold, thousands of people were waiting at the airport to have a last look at their leader. This was Tirath's first and last visit to Leh. Says Tirath of his friend, "Narboo was really a rare and accomplished human being. He went too young. I miss him terribly."

While two other boys, Sohan and Kundan, also became his particular friends, Tirath grew especially close to their brother Bakshi Manohar Lal. Says Tirath of his friend, Manohar, "We took an instant liking to each other – a liking that was destined to grow into a lifelong affection. He was a man of many facets and his abilities enabled him to perform diverse roles in life with great success, including that of Transport Commissioner, Jammu & Kashmir. But, at this moment, as so often, when I think of him it is the memory of his melodious voice that floods my mind and heart. He loved to sing:

*"Doli chardeyan marian Heer kookan,
mainu le challe babula, le challe ne"*

While getting into the bridal palanquin, Heer cried out : "They are taking me away, O Father, they are taking me away."

And also Sufi Saif-ul-Malook's couplets:

*"Bagg baharan te gulzaran, sada na sobat yaaran,
Sada na husn jawani rehndi, sada na mauj baharan".*

The gardens may not blossom endlessly,
Youth and beauty cannot eternal be,
Nor the company of good friends,
Nor lasting these enrapturings be....

His choice of poetry, I feel, always reflected his deep self; whether he played the flute or the violin, he always kept us spellbound. Our friendship saw us visiting Muzaffarabad many a time, where his uncle, Bakshi Devi Saran, was Divisional Forest Officer. How was I to know that one day our friendship would be cemented into a family bond?

Aboard a flight from Srinagar to Jammu in 1966, that disappeared in the mountain tops of the Pir Panjal, Manohar made his exit from our lives in a characteristically enigmatic way. The state thus lost an able administrator and I, a wonderful friend.

I take solace in the fact that his daughters Shashi, with her husband Maini Sahib, and Shobha with her husband Ravi, are still a very integral part of our lives."

We could go on about all our friends. While I am there to help jog Tirath's mind about old college friends, his deep regret is his fading memory which has made valuable names and incidents from later years vanish.

The First Job

Inexorably, our carefree college days drew to an end and our merry band of young men was scattered. In college, it had seemed as though the party would go on forever. Now, like young people anywhere in the world, Tirath and his friends were forced to face the stern realities of life, foremost of which was to find a livelihood. None of us had exhibited outstanding academic ability, perhaps because we had been keener by far on extra-curricular activities. Moreover, no opportunities existed for young graduates those days in private enterprise. The only jobs available were in the public sector and were painfully few.

Just then, however, the state government decided to raise a Kuth Protection Force headed by Kuth Supervisors under the Forest Department, which augured well for young and hardy new graduates.

Kuth (*Saussurea lappa*) is a herb that grows naturally only in the Western Himalayas. It is valued for its bulbous underground roots that fetch a handsome price in the world market, especially in China, where they are used in incense and as a source of valuable medicine. But hordes of kuth poachers from Kagan and other tribal areas of the NWFP would sneak into the forests of the Kishan Ganga in J&K's Keran Division where this valuable plant grew in plenty and escape with their booty back to their villages. Very often they were armed and terrorized both the locals and the regular forest protection staff.

The state government's move to check these financially depleting invasions of its territory crystallized as the Kuth Protection Force. Groups of ex-servicemen were to be led by a Kuth Supervisor in each section of the forest. The Divisional Forest Officer, Keran, was invested with judicial powers to enable swift justice. As emolument for confronting and catching armed poachers, the state was pleased to pay a Kuth Supervisor the handsome wage of rupees fifty a month.

Tirath applied for this job and was chosen from amongst more than a hundred aspiring graduates, thanks to his physical excellence. Selection was determined in the simplest and most direct fashion imaginable, by how the Shankaracharya Race was run: old ground for Tirath, who had run up that very hill not long ago to save his friends from the Hanjis of Gagribal.

This time, too, Tirath ran for his life, as though murderous boatmen were in pursuit. He completed the race in 19 minutes, a record that remains unbroken even after 75 years. The authorities were actually skeptical at first of this feat but had to accept it as fact when verified by the referees posted all along the route. Handed a letter of appointment by the Conservator of Forests, Tirath laughed and shrugged. College frolics were definitely over. But who knew what other delightful adventures lay ahead?

Tirath's brief but eventful career as a Kuth Supervisor began with reporting to the Divisional Forest Officer, Keran. The DFO ordered him to Lawat Village where the word was out that smugglers were trying to sneak out of the state with a loot of kuth. A posse of ex-servicemen was also sent to assist him. Tirath soon discovered from the villagers that they knew the location of the cave where the smugglers had made their hideout. Their exact number was not known, nor the number of guns they carried.

Tirath sent one of his most trusted soldiers on a recce, who crept into the cave and returned with the surprising information that the smugglers had precisely one gun between them and that lay slung casually at a distance from where three of the band lay in deep siesta. The soldier set out again and easily secured the poachers' gun and rushed out with it to Tirath. Roused from their slumber, the poachers ran out of the cave and slammed into Tirath, who stood in wait at the entrance. He pounced on them and struck their leader, a tall, burly man, with his wooden staff. After a short scuffle, the smugglers were overpowered and handcuffed.

Meanwhile, dusk had fallen and Tirath decided to get back to camp at daybreak. However, his servant back in Lawat Village, grew anxious and reported the matter to the DFO at Keran. Everybody feared the worst, but Tirath astounded them next day by producing his shuffling band of captives at the DFO's headquarters.

There was consternation in the DFO's court, however, when the prisoners ignored the shabby, pheran-clad DFO and smartly saluted Tirath instead, convinced no doubt by his hat and breeches that he was the senior authority figure. This resulted in the DFO making a significant sartorial change: while he resisted abandoning his informal pheran even in court, he took to wearing a felt hat thereafter to let whomsoever it concerned know who the real boss was. With such a sensational start, Tirath was well-secured in his first job.

Moreover, he rapidly discovered that being a forest warden allowed him to indulge in his favourite hobby, hunting. A love that he passed on to his son Krishan who became an excellent shot. He even tried to teach his daughters but they had no interest in the sport.

One incident, however, gave Tirath pause. Spotting a black bear and cub in Lawat forest one day, he followed them on shikar. He shot at the mother, wounding the bear, who ran for cover at first, but shambled back to protect her cub. However, she fell dead and the cub was caught and brought back to the village. Eventually, the cub had to be shot as well, since it could not be reared in captivity and it was feared that it would not survive alone in the jungle.

When their bodies were skinned, everyone was surprised to find that whereas the stomach of the dead mother contained nothing but rough and dry tree bark, the cub's stomach was full of insects and soft bark pulp. The mother bear had clearly fed her cub on the best tidbits available, while denying herself almost to the point of starvation. This took the sheen off hunting as a sport for Tirath, who later shot only for food and eventually gave up meat altogether.

Tirath inexplicably fell into a deep depression in the early 80s. Medically there was really nothing wrong but it was heartrending for his children to see their strong, vibrant father sitting quietly, not having the strength and desire to leave even his bedroom. This lasted for a fairly long time until one day when Tirath was in Jammu, the urge suddenly came upon him to visit Mata Vaishno Devi. It is truly Mata's miracle that though Tirath was never outwardly religious in any manner, he went up in that depressed state and came back his normal self, never having to encounter depression again. That day Tirath realised that there was definitely a higher power that controls our destinies and he became a *bhakt* of Mata. He gave up eating meat and chicken in 1988 as a pledge made to Mata Vaishno Devi when his prayers for a loved one were answered by her. This was a huge sacrifice for a Kashmiri and a foodie who would begin the day with harissa (a finely-minced lamb dish) and could not conceive of a meal without his favourite rogan josh or other elements of the wazwan...

After about two years, when Tirath eventually resigned from the post of Kuth Supervisor, it was I who landed the job. A tough act to follow!

5
1932 - A Love Story

In the mid-winter of 1932, Tirath had come home as usual for the college vacation. This time, his friends, Sohan and Kundan, had come as well to Muzaffarabad to visit their uncle Bakshi Devi Saran, the Divisional Forest Officer.

One day, Tirath went to meet his friends at their uncle's official residence, which was located below the plateau on which the town was built and enjoyed a beautiful view of the Kishan Ganga flowing nearby. The house had a large lawn dotted with fruit trees and rose bushes.

Recalls Tirath, "The three of us were sitting on the lawn when suddenly a beautiful young girl holding a small monkey at the end of a rope appeared on the scene. She began walking towards us but was curtly shooed away by my friends. I was taken aback but did not consider it proper to ask my friends who she was and why she had been prevented from joining us when she seemed keen to do so. I was further intrigued by the way she had been waved off so rudely when a polite word or two would have sufficed."

"That night I could not get these thoughts out of my head for a long time. I decided to satisfy my curiosity and went right back to the house next day. This time I bluntly questioned my friends about the girl. They told me that she was their cousin, Satya, who was the only child of their uncle, Bakshi Devi Saran and his wife, Janki Devi, and that she had been born deaf and mute."

"I decided then and there to visit my friends every day and invited Satya to join us in a very friendly manner. She was overjoyed and I started interacting with her by trying to learn her sign language."

Satya's father was from Kotli in Mirpur district. After graduation from Edinburgh, he took to government service as a forest officer in Srinagar. Satya's mother hailed from Peshawar and was the eldest daughter of a doctor.

Because of her disabilities, Satya was never sent to school. Instead, her pets were her playmates: dogs, birds and Mastoo, the monkey. She was taught to ride and shoot by her father, who took her along on all his forest inspections. She lived in a make-believe world of princes and princesses and often told her cousins through her own brand of sign language that some day, a prince would come riding on a white horse and take her away to be his princess. Her cousins would tease her about her fancies, knowing full well that a disabled girl like her would never find a husband in their society.

In order to escape the summer heat of Muzaffarabad, Bakshi Sahib would move to Kacharian, a cool and scenic place about 40 miles away in Kishan Ganga Valley.

The summer after he first met Satya, Tirath was unable to resist seeing her again. He was fascinated by Satya's beauty and zest for life, despite her handicap. One day, he teased her, as Kundan and Sohan did, about the handsome prince of her dreams. He jokingly asked when he was expected to come and take her away. As their children, Krishan, Vijay and Kiran tell it today, "Mummy looked at him with tears in her eyes and haltingly explained through sign language that there was no prince; and with her handicap, who would marry her? That was the moment Papaji fell in love with her and resolved, come what may, that he would be the one to wed her."

Tirath set out to win Satya's affections and over the next few years became a friend who loved and respected her. He realised that he truly was in love with her. Finally, on one of his summer visits to Kacharian, Tirath told Satya's father that there was an important matter he wished to privately discuss. Bakshi Sahib asked Tirath to go with him on work next day. And there, with the forest as witness, Tirath declared his love for Satya and asked her father for her hand.

Bakshi Sahib was genuinely surprised that Tirath proposed to marry a handicapped person and told him that no immediate decision was possible, thinking that time

would make the impulsive young man reconsider his proposal. Tirath could tell that Satya liked him too, and told her he intended to marry her. She conveyed to him that she too would like that to happen, but it was up to her parents to make the final decision and that Tirath should take the matter up with them. The seasons turned and in winter, Bakshi Sahib and Janki Devi (called 'Biji') went to Lahore.

"After that morning, it took two whole years of my perseverance for Bakshi Sahib to resolve matters in his mind. He wrote to me approving of the proposal, provided I still wished to marry Satya," says Tirath. "I was, of course, overjoyed, as his long-awaited letter dispelled all the uncertainty and anxiety clouding my mind. I promptly wrote back to thank Bakshi Sahib and told him that I would now ask for my brothers' approval, which I was sure to secure early."

Tirath lost no time in stating his case to his siblings. They were shocked and upset and initially refused to allow him to marry a handicapped girl. After a lot of argument, his family agreed and horoscopes were exchanged.

Now it was the turn of the stars to play a negative role in the matter. The Bakshis' family priest declared that Tirath was *manglik* (astrologically sinister) and that his union with Satya would be detrimental for her.

"May God bless the learned Panditji for suggesting an *upaye* (appeasement strategy)," laughs Tirath, who was symbolically "married" first to the *akki* plant to nullify the evil effects of his being *manglik* on his *second* bride – Satya.

At long last, after all the hurdles had been crossed and difficulties overcome, Tirath's marriage to Satya was fixed for June 19, 1939 at Chatternar, an extremely beautiful place in a dense forest above the township of Bandipur, where Bakshi Sahib had in the meanwhile been transferred.

When the *barat* (bridegroom's party) reached Chatternar on the appointed day, they were welcomed by a severe storm that mercifully blew over soon. Satya

was finally married to her prince, with all the colour and clamour of a good, old-fashioned Hindu wedding. "I, of course, was in the seventh heaven, having won my bride after two long years," says Tirath.

A funny thing happened after the *barat* retired for the night. A party of the bride's cousins woke them up with a pailful of milk, actually intended as a sleeping potion. Annoyed at being roused from the deep slumber that follows a splendid dinner, the groom's party sent one of Tirath's friends, Deva Singh Sarna, to deal with their importunate hosts. Deva Singh crossly gulped down the whole pailful, glass by glass – a pail meant for at least two dozen people – and sent Satya's cousins away with a stern warning to let the *barat* sleep. Next morning Deva Singh was up and about as usual, asking for breakfast, to the astonishment of his hosts who were certain, and not unreasonably, that he would be unfit to move even a muscle after that copious draught, exactly like a giant in a Sanskrit epic.

Tirath took his new bride away with just a modest bridegift as requested: clothes and jewelry for Satya, and only after much pressure, accepted a token amount of Rs 1,500, precisely the amount spent by Bakshi Sahib earlier on a niece's wedding. Tirath gave away part of this amount to his friend from Hunza, I.S. Khan, who was soon going to England; and the rest to his other friends for having a party.

Tirath and Satya, chaperoned by her paternal aunt, Moolo Devi, left for Muzaffarabad on June 21, the summer solstice. But they could not enter the Amla homestead because of an odd custom: a new bride (Tirath's neice, Pushpa, married the previous day) had not yet left the house in her *doli* (bridal palanquin). "So we spent that night in another of our houses and moved into our family home on June 22. After another night's stay, we went back to Bandipur," recalls Tirath, with an ironic bow to tradition.

About three months after the marriage, Satya conceived. Tirath and Satya's mother, Biji, took her to Rainawari Hospital, Srinagar, for a check-up. Dr

Choudhary, a lady medico, confirmed the pregnancy. She took Tirath aside and, says Tirath, "Advised me not to have children, as they were likely to be born deaf and dumb like their mother. She even offered to arrange an abortion of the child Satya was already carrying. I, of course, flatly refused to accept her advice. How could I deny Satya the pleasure of having a child of her own, whatever the odds?"

The couple moved to Lahore where Tirath hired a big, commodious house on Mall Road, belonging to a Parsi lady called Miss Sethna and arranged for their child's delivery by a renowned German gynaecologist, Dr. Mendelsohn and his nurse wife. After examining Satya, the doctor declared that the child was not positioned normally but assured the anxious parents of a safe delivery.

Eventually on March 30, 1940, Satya gave birth to a boy who initially seemed still-born to Tirath and Satya. The Germans rolled the baby from side to side, held him upside down, thumped him on the back and chest and put him alternately in cold and warm water. Tirath noticed with a pang of fear that Dr. and Mrs. Mendelsohn were sweating profusely, their faces crumpled with worry. After about five minutes, which appeared to be an eternity for the parents, their efforts bore fruit and a faint cry issued from the newborn. Dr Mendelsohn now grinned from ear to ear and holding the child up, exclaimed, "You naughty boy, you have indeed given us a hard time!" Satya was allowed to look at her first born and went to sleep, smiling. Tirath's first child was named Krishan. He and the two little sisters who followed - Vijay Lakshmi and Kiran - were all born perfectly normal, disproving Dr. Choudhary's prediction.

Our Parents

Childhood Memories by Krishan, Vijay Lakshmi, Kiran

Today, Papaji and Mummy, in the twilight of their lives, have a bond between them which is very rare. Theirs is a love story like no other. As little children whenever we questioned Papaji about why Mummy could not speak or hear like others, he would tell us that she was "God's own special person" and that marrying her was the turning point in his life.

After marriage, Mummy's make-believe world of kings and queens started taking shape and Papaji, from an ordinary forest officer, became one of the richest businessmen in the state. He always told Mummy that she was his lucky charm. When God took away her faculties of hearing and speech, her other inherent senses were sharpened. We never felt unable and neither did she, to communicate with us. She could hear and speak to us more than anybody else. To us she is not deaf and mute: we have a different language, that's all.

Ours was a very happy home, full of life, love and laughter. As Mummy was their only child, her parents moved in with us. Our mother's mother or Nani (everybody called her Biji) was a lovely person, whose laughter could be heard from one end of Rajbagh, where we lived, to the other. It was she, with the help of her younger sister Vimla, (closer in age to Mummy) who helped bring us up.

Together Mummy, Biji and Vimla Aunty gave us a beautiful childhood, full of love and care. We are all grateful to Vimla Aunty for giving us the warmth of her lap as babies and unconditional love ever after. Today Vimla Aunty lives in Mumbai with her devoted son Siddharth (Kuki). Whenever we meet up, the three of us go right back into our childhood and can't thank her enough for being such a loving part of it.

Biji is omnipresent in our memories with all her love and wisdom. Now that we look back, we realize what a tremendous task she did, running a home that was always buzzing with relatives and friends. All the young nephews from both our

mother's family and our father's family were living with us to complete their college education. Biji was a mother figure to all. We never saw her under any pressure. She was a very relaxed and happy person. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren cannot forget her large, cuddly lap, sitting on which they heard the most amazing, fun stories. She used to sit with the majesty of a grand queen with her "*makhmal ka takht*" (velvet bolster), her chessboard laid out and her booming voice, exclaiming, "*Shaitan ke Naane, na machhar!*" each time one of the kids stepped out of line.

Our Nana, whom we, like our parents, called 'Pitaji', was a very reserved person. He had a strict routine that one could set a clock by, with a sacred hour for everything, be it listening to the radio, smoking his hookah or the evening walk. He dressed immaculately always in his English hat and suit and enjoyed reading detective novels, particularly Erle Stanley Gardner's 'Perry Mason' series. Pitaji dropped his reserve to regale us with funny family stories and would always tease Biji about dozing off while praying.

Our father, who hailed from a traditional family and a fairly backward area, had the vision and wish to have us well-educated and exposed to the best the world had to offer at the time. A teacher was duly engaged to instruct us in singing, playing the harmonium and the tabla (none of us, however, mastered these three arts). We had classes for drawing and painting and were encouraged to work in the garden to tend various flower beds and fruit trees.

Krishan fondly remembers how Papaji introduced him to his two passions, shooting and fishing. Papaji would keep him supplied with different types of guns and the latest in fishing tackle, and to encourage his interest in photography, bought him a state-of-the-art Leica – a prized possession in those days.

Despite being conservative (we thought he would never let his daughters wear swimsuits) he taught us all to swim and surf in Nagin Lake. As children, our favourite hangout was the Nagin Club, whose wizard *khansama* made the most delicious cheese toast and sardines on toast.

Some of our best memories are of the so very British Srinagar Club where we would play billiards, (which Krishan later mastered). We could not but notice that our father, who came from a background far removed from that social environment, was the toast of the club, and that our mother was feted and loved by all she met. Papaji's success and rise in society, so unobtrusive and natural, we feel, was because of his humility and strength of character. He never pretended to be what he was not, yet his genuine personality made him stand tall. Nothing else can explain the abundant affection and esteem lavished by 'smart' city people on this essentially rustic couple.

Though our father did not at that time believe much in the rituals of religion, he always told us that doing good deeds from our heart was the best form of prayer. His favourite book used to be Ramayana, because it enshrined the characters of an ideal king, an ideal father and son and an ideal wife in the luminous figures of Ram and Sita. We would wait eagerly for him to come home in the evenings so that we could all gather around and have him read aloud from the Ramayana.

We always had dinner together no matter how late he came (which was most evenings). He would hear our day's activities at this hour and either read to us or share some of his own childhood stories and lessons, which always had us fascinated.

Papaji thrived on people and guests were welcome at all times, which meant that our house was always full of relatives and friends. Ever so often, Papaji would sleep in the enclosed verandah outside his room, to make room for the overflow of houseguests.

Mummy would accompany Papaji wherever he went and he was visibly proud to have her by his side. His friends learned her special sign language and made her part of their group. In fact, sometimes our special language was most useful when the family wished to exchange secrets in crowded rooms.

We too were a part of our parents' highly active social life and have many happy memories of parties, of drives to Tangmarg, Gulmarg and Pahalgam, of *doonga*

(boat) cruises down the lakes, with food cooked and served on board, and always, a lot of singing and storytelling.

Our parents had a group of friends who were and still are very close – Narboo Uncle, Pal Aunt, their children, Deskit and Pinto; Prem Uncle, Vimla Aunt, their daughters Renu, Anju and Geeta; Muzaffar Uncle and Alima Aunt; Shammi Aunt, Dr. Ali Jan, D.P. Uncle and Rani Bhabi, Maqsood Uncle and Chikken Uncle, Pestonjee Uncle and Aunt Pestonjee – they were all an integral part of our growing up years, as eclectic a religious and social mix as anyone could wish. We were all virtually part of one gigantic family.

To us children growing up in the idyllic environs of Kashmir, this precious, irreplaceable period lives on as vivid postcards of memory: the ritual Diwali call on the Pestonjees, where we would get a silver rupee each; Uncle Muzaffar's mother, "Mamma", spoiling us with her terrific cooking; celebrating Eid at Uncle Ali Jan's house where a lavish wazwan was always laid out; kehwa at the Maqsoods.....

Papaji's great friend, Maqsood Uncle (Maqsood Ali) lived in a beautiful house on the Nagin Lake and we spent many evenings with his very traditional Kashmiri family enjoying their hospitality while the two friends, who had much in common with each other, talked about Kashmiri politics and other matters. Their third close friend, Chikken Uncle, used to join in and we could not but marvel at his tremendous sense of humour. Till Chikken Uncle passed away a few years ago it was his regular visits to Papaji which would lead to unbridled laughter at our home.

As our dear Pinto has put quite beautifully in his message on Papaji's 90th birthday: "Tirath Uncle's dining table was never complete without at least a dozen people eating off it. And the delicious food was personally ladled out by him to friends and relatives with choice morsels singled out for us children. He enjoyed eating good food as much as he enjoyed seeing others eat it. His outlook on life has always been "What can he give to others to whom God had given nothing? Only he can give to whom God has given." Without a word about Satya Aunt these

few lines would be totally inadequate. Though born handicapped, she was destined to marry Tirath Uncle. This was a marriage made in heaven that was nourished and blossomed on earth in the love and affection that Tirath Uncle showered upon her. As children, we would often unknowingly or uncaringly mimic lame or otherwise handicapped people and could see the pain on Uncle's face. He would gently make us understand that this was cruel and unseemly behaviour. To this day, the care and affection he gives her is exemplary."

Says Justice Tirath Singh Thakur, one of Papaji's dearest friends (despite being half his age) "It was during numerous visits to Srinagar in connection with the cases with Trilochan Dutt (a business partner and politician), that I had the opportunity of seeing and enjoying Lalaji's hospitality. His house in Sonwar was always buzzing with activity, entertaining guests from all over the country. Politicians in and out of power belonging to different political hues and shades were Lalaji's personal friends, the political equations making little difference to their mutual regard or affection for each other. Because of Lalaji's long innings in Parliament, stretching over two decades, he had developed personal friendships with and earned the admiration of almost everyone who came in contact with him. It was therefore impossible for any one known to Lalaji to visit or leave Kashmir without meeting him and enjoying his hospitality. Authentic Kashmiri cuisine locally called wazwan and animated discussions on politics and poetry used to be the highlights of these evenings, with Lalaji's family playing gracious hosts."

Now, as we watch Papaji and Mummy relate proudly and affectionately to their great-grandchildren, we realize anew that our parents' relationship is most rare and unprecedented. After almost seven decades together they are one being, not two individuals. They don't need to say a word to each other. He sits pre-occupied with his memories and his files. She sits patiently with one eye on the TV and the other on him, in absolute togetherness. Even today he teases her that she is his "*Devi*" and all his success is because of her. She laughs and calls him "*Budhoo!*" but in her heart she believes what he says is true.

Papaji has made Mummy believe in her importance in his life. They have both made us believe that storybook love exists. But even more perhaps, than Papaji's obviously heroic qualities, it is our mother's sweetness of character that we would like to honour here. Our mother's outstanding quality of patience, her loving nature and her complete lack of malice have all made us feel blessed by her presence. Every person in our family, young and old, is drawn to her.

Her zest for life, which was so evident from her childhood, has not dwindled at all even now when she is 85. She is as curious and inquisitive to know and participate in what is happening around her as she was in her youth. A lot of the time, this is not easy because people do not have the patience to pause their talk and explain to Mummy the intricate details of their conversation. However, we never fail to be amazed at how we could be talking about a particular person and she will know immediately who it is just by watching us. Nuances like anger, excitement or emotions of any type do not escape her eagle eye, which makes her eager to know what's going on. Trying to fob her off with a general middle-of-the-road answer is what everybody does but she is far too sharp and always knows if you are holding out.

She sits patiently through the day, watching television, watching people, asking for nothing, expecting nothing. In fact her nature is probably the closest manifestation on earth of Godliness since she actually does not see, hear or speak any evil and has absolutely no expectations from others. What a lesson this lady can teach everyone.

The Hindus say that there are certain souls who are highly evolved and have just one birth left to work off before they merge in God. The North Indian term, we are told, for such old, purified souls is "bhrasht yogi", one who has missed moksha or liberation minutely by one last birth.

We feel our mother is one of those pure souls.

Here is a recent poem for Mummy as a gift from her grandson Vikas Dhar.

काश मेरे दादा ज़िन्दा होते

मंगल मंगल
मंगल मंगल है।
घर आए ... सोचा
काश मेरे दादा ज़िन्दा होते
आज़ादी की कहानी
जो मंगल से शुरू हुई
देखी और सुनी
सब सबक सिखाते
काश मेरे दादा ज़िन्दा होते।

काश मेरी नानी बोल सकती,
सब देखती है
बहुत चतुर है नानी।
कैसे मालूम?
जानवर, बच्चे और वोह
जिनकी रूह शीशे सी हो
सब नानी को अनकहीं
कहानी सुनाते हैं
हंसते हैं रोते हैं
सब समझाती है नानी।

बाग में सौ सौ चक्कर
काटती थी नानी।
ठण्डी हवा पहले उन्हें घेरती
फिर डालियों से गप शप
हाँका करती

फूल कहते
जल्दी खिले
टहलती नानी हाथ फेरे।

सब बच्चों को शहद
चटाती है नानी।
जब माँ ना देखे
तो हंसके
दूसरा चमच्च
खिलाती है नानी
हाँ लीला
हाँ नाएरा
याद रखना
नानी बड़ी सयानी।

नानी हमेशा
नानी ना थी
सत्य है
रानी थी।
सफ़ेद घोड़े पर सवार
ना हो
पर राजा वो था
जो नानी को
अपने घर ले गया।
नाना मेरा
क्या कहना उनके

जो इस किताब
में लिखा ना हो।

क्या बताओ
की शेर से लड़ा
जिन्दगी से लड़ा
मेरा नाना।
यारों का चार
और दुश्मनों का क्या
शुरू से खाक।
अपने घर में
नाना के जूतों की
चूं.....चूं
से आज के सब बड़े
बिसतरों के नीचे छुपते।

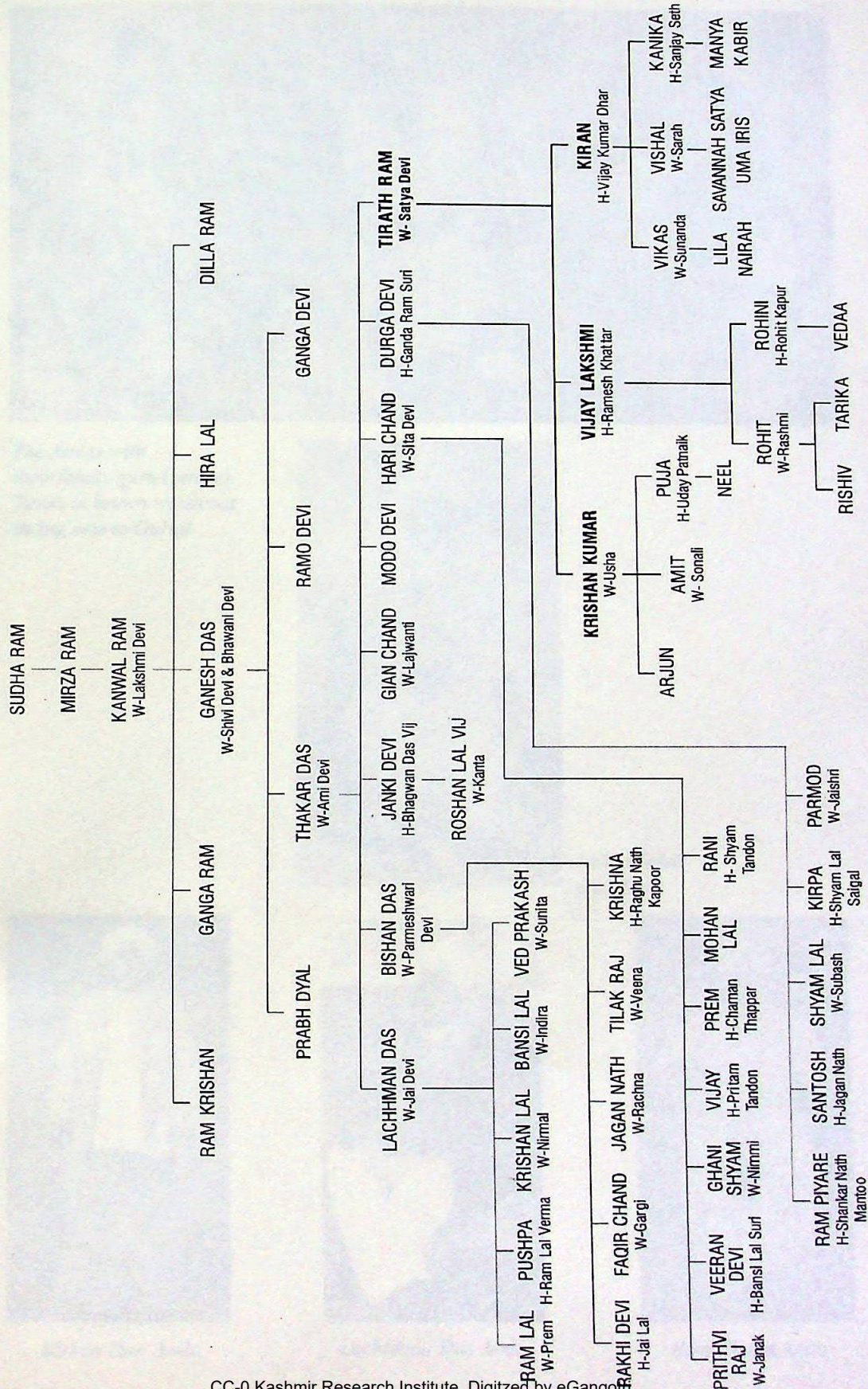
हामीद खान को
पकड़ेगी पुलिस
कोई कमबल में लपेटो,
कुछ करो!
कोई बात नहीं
वो आ रहा है तीरथ
बैन्ड बाजे के साथ।
हैं? बैन्ड बाजे के साथ?
हार पहनाया
हामीद खान को
ढोलकी पे नाचते पुलिसवाले

उनको गाड़ी में
छोड़ के आए।

धरती पे सब कुछ दीये
नानी को।
रानी का दिया दरज़ा
पर बहुत चतुर
है नाना भी
सितारे चुमे
क्योंकि किसमत थी
किसमत का नाम
सत्या था।

क्या बताऊँ
की ज्यादा ना हो
नानी-नाना
बहुत खूब
काश मेरे दादा जिन्दा होते
तो सब को नाना नानी के
किस्से सुनाते।
नाना के बहुत अच्छे दोस्त थे
काश मेरे दादा जिन्दा होते
तो शायद
ये किताब खुद लिखते।

विकास धर





*The Amlas with
their family guru (centre).
Tirath in brown waistcoat
sitting next to Guruji*



*Lala Thakar
Das Amla*



Bishan Das Amla



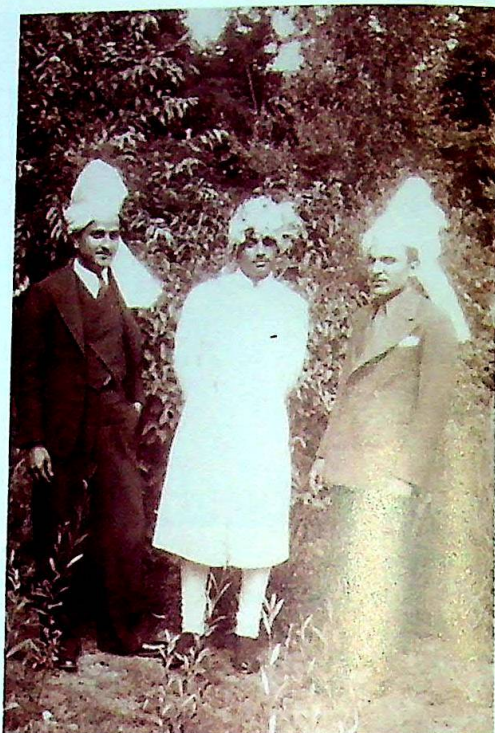
Lachhman Das Amla



Hari Chand Amla



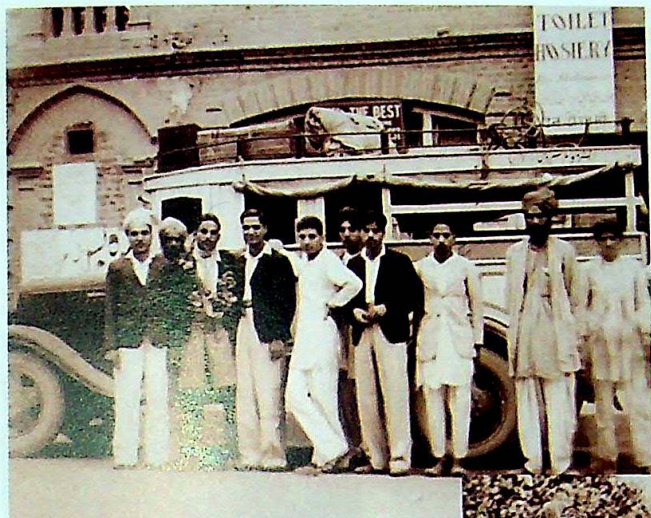
Tirath (L) with his friend Hari Chand



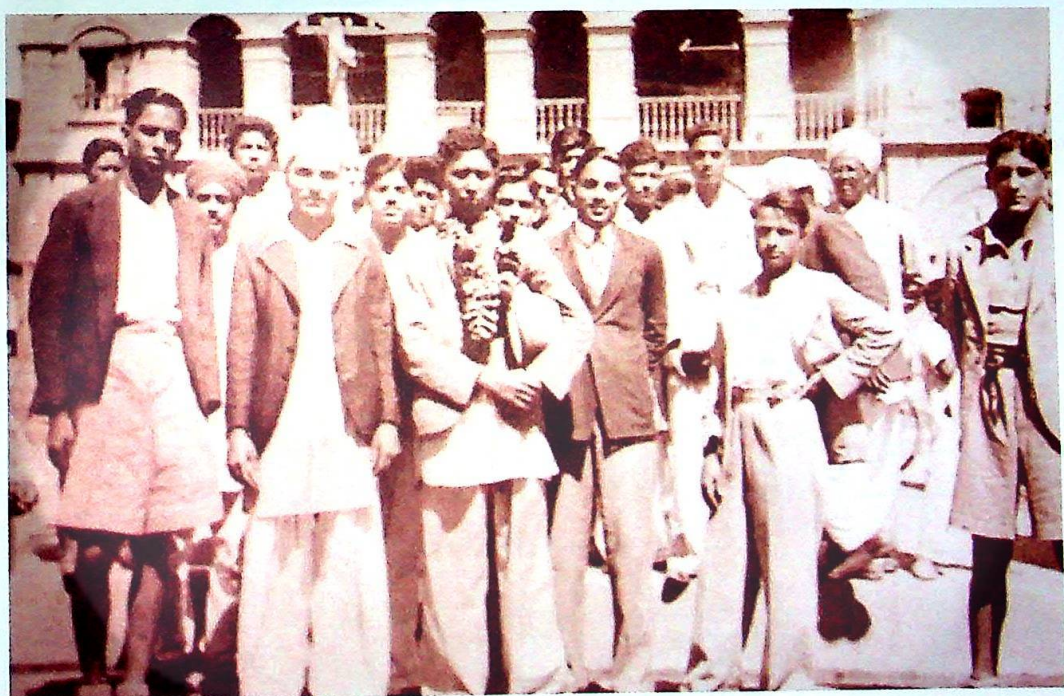
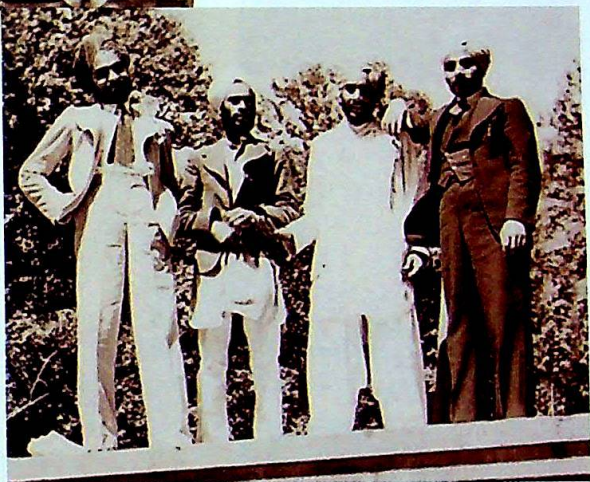
Tirath as bridegroom with Abdul Hamid Khan (L) & Mr. Aga (R)



*Wedding photograph with family.
Sitting left to right - Tirath, Biji, Satya, Satya's Dadi 'Baiji' and Pitaji*



*Friends bidding
farewell to Tirath
going on his first job as
Kuth Supervisor*



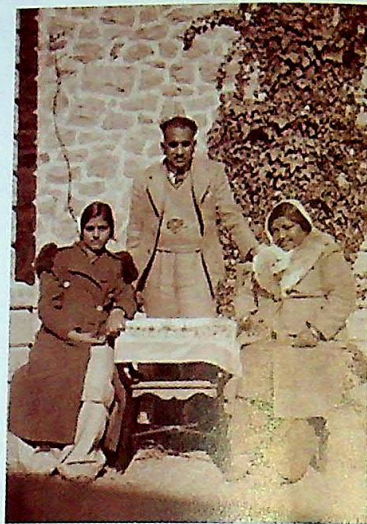
Sonam Narboo (centre) with Tirath (fourth from left)



Biji in 1970



Pitaji



*Satya with parents
Bakshi Devi Saran and
Janki Devi*

Standing from right: Tirath, Sohan, Manohar, Gyan, Kundan, Brij Lal. Sitting: Loknath (centre, garlanded). On his right Bakshi Devi Saran and on his left Raghunath Malhotra

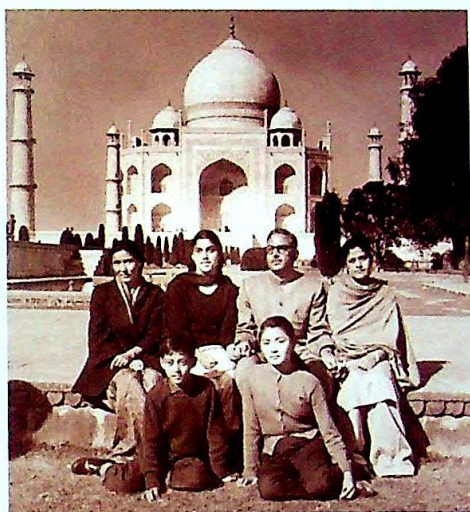




*Satya with Krishan and
Vijay Lakshmi (in lap)*



*Tirath with teenage Krishan
under the icicles*

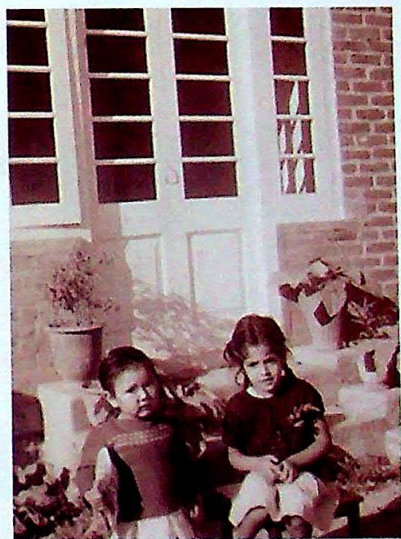


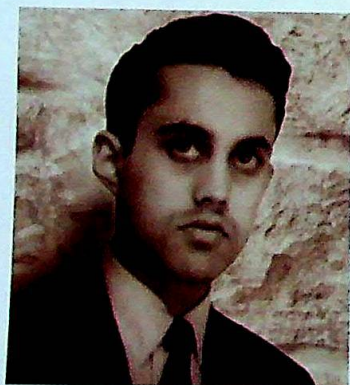
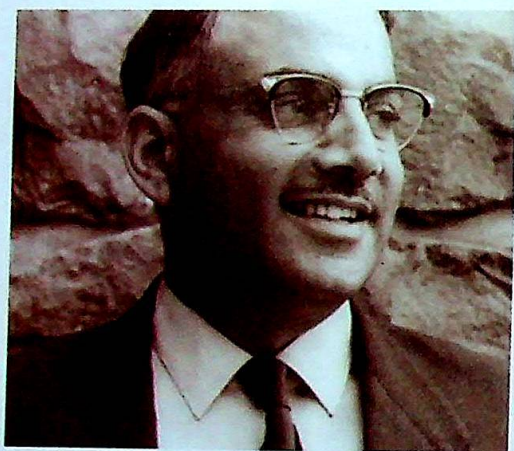
*A visit to
Taj Mahal -
Pal Narboo, Vijay
Lakshmi, Tirath, Satya,
Pinto and Deskrit.*

*Krishan, Vijay Lakshmi
and Kiran with Deskrit and Pinto*



Kiran with Deskrit

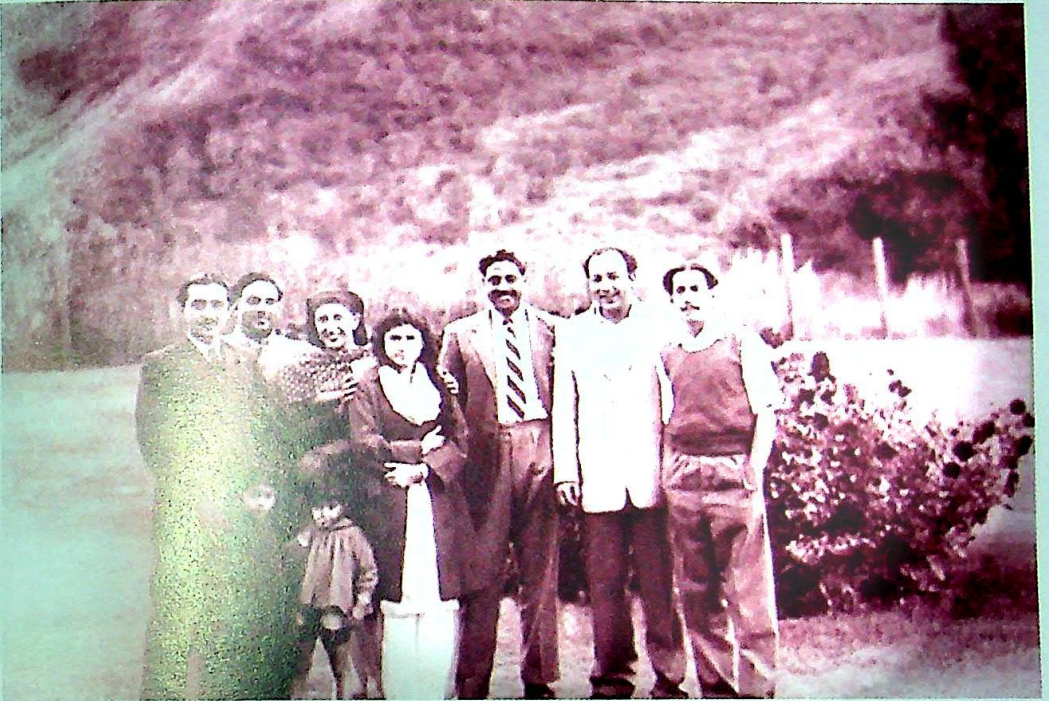




Vijay Lakshmi

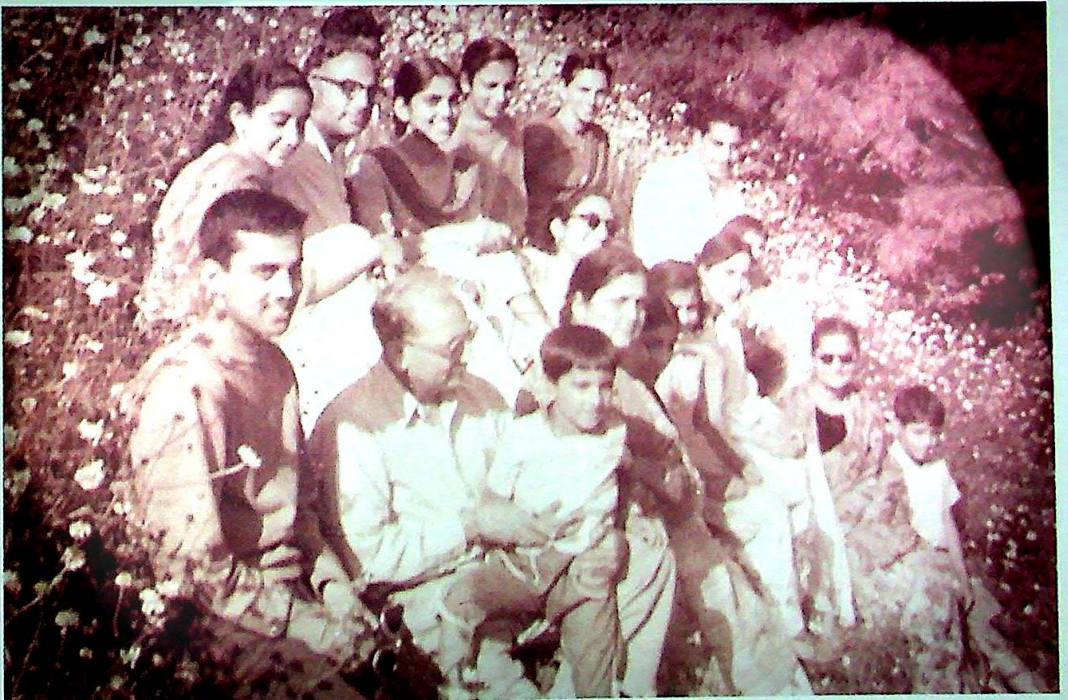
Krishan

Kiran



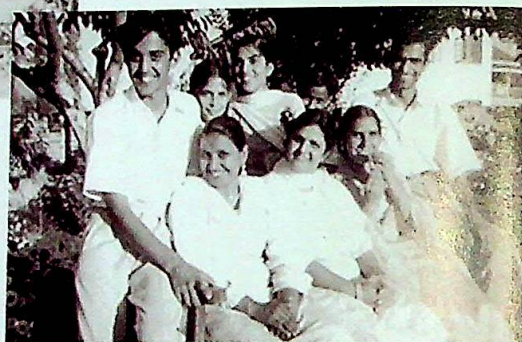
S K Raina, Tirath, Aru, Aleema, Prakash Soni, D P Dhar, Agha Muzaffar, Huma & Humayun

Picnic with friends and family

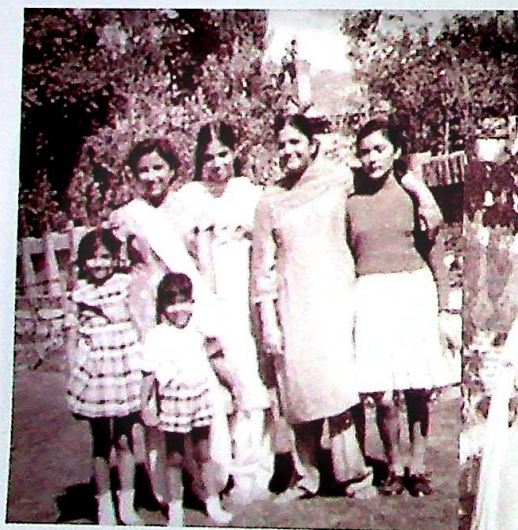




A group of friends



*Krishan, Kiran, Vijay Lakshmi, Ravi;
Sitting - Vimla, Satya, Ramo*



*Satya with Indira, Radhika, Anand,
Kiran & Deskrit*



*Ramo, Vimla, Vijay Lakshmi,
Chaman, Krishan, Kiran, Ravi & Satya*

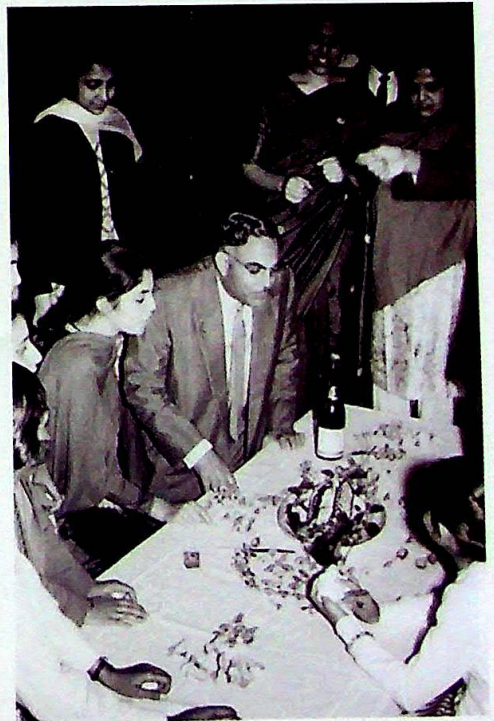


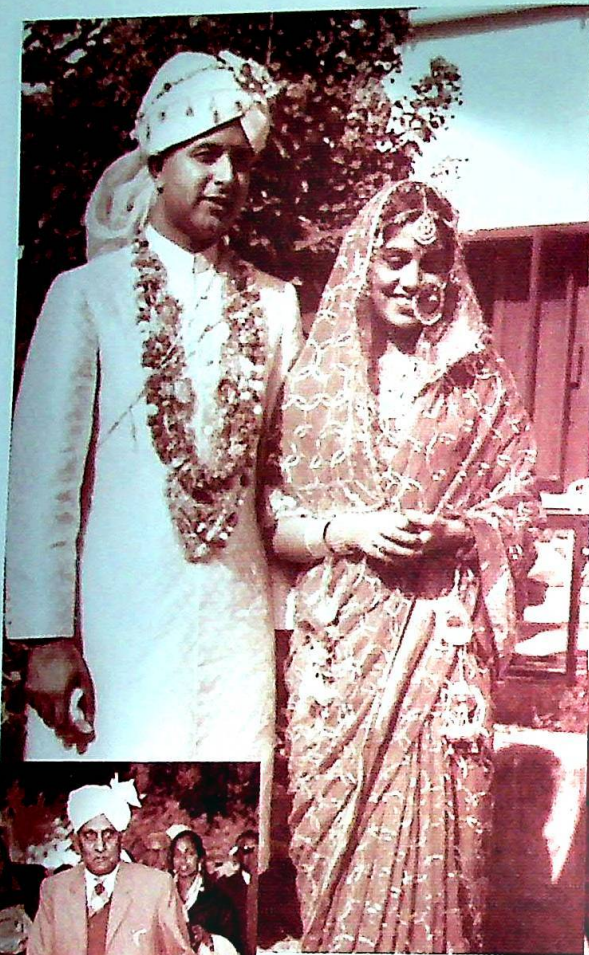
On Biji's niece Rita's wedding



*Celebrating
55th Birthday*

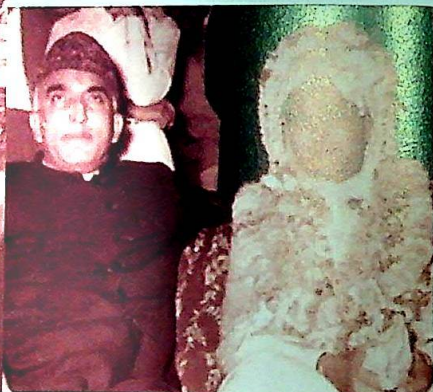
Sonam Narboo with Tirath & family





▲
*Satya gazes lovingly
at her daughter getting
ready for her wedding*

*Ramesh with Bakshi
Gulam Mohammed* ▼

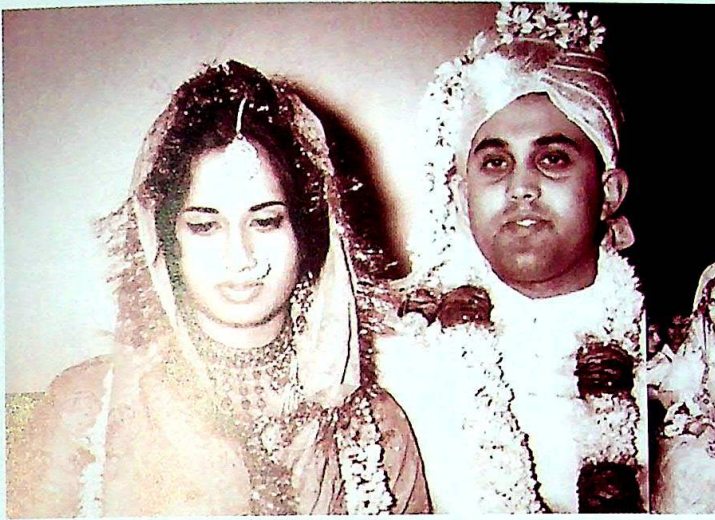


▲
*Vijay Lakshmi and Ramesh Khattar - the new bride and groom,
September 8, 1962*

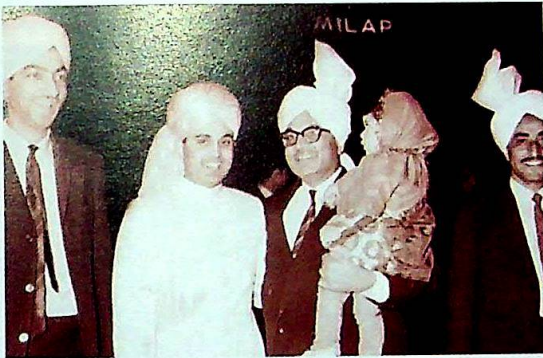
◀ *Pitaji at the wedding*



Tirath at the wedding of Vijay and Ramesh with his brothers Digant and Pooja



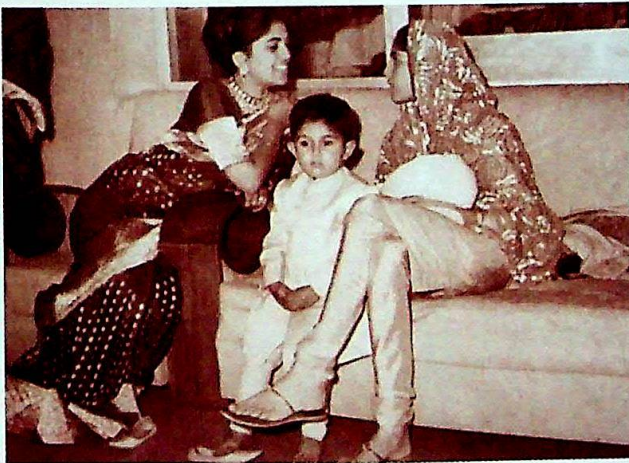
*Usha and
Krishan,
the newly weds*



*Vijay Dhar, Krishan, Tirath with Rohini in arms
& Jagan*



*At Krishan's wedding
D. P. Dhar and G. M. Sadiq*



*At Krishan's wedding, Vijay Lakshmi and
Kiran with Rohit*



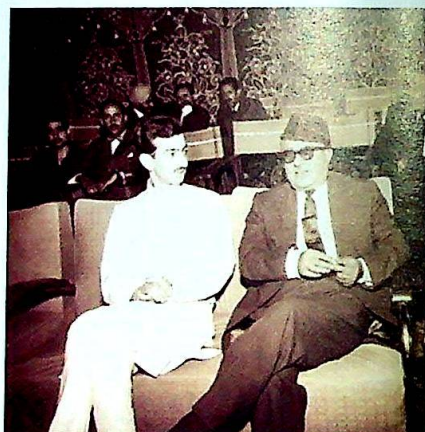
With D. P. Dhar



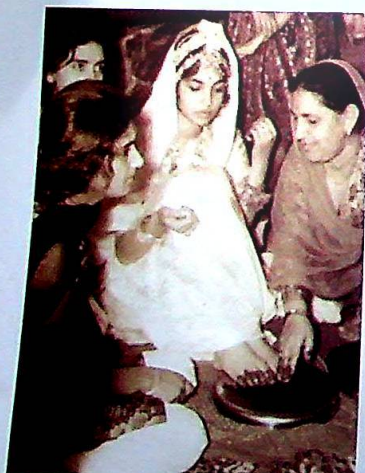
Posh Puja



Tirath and DP exchanging garlands



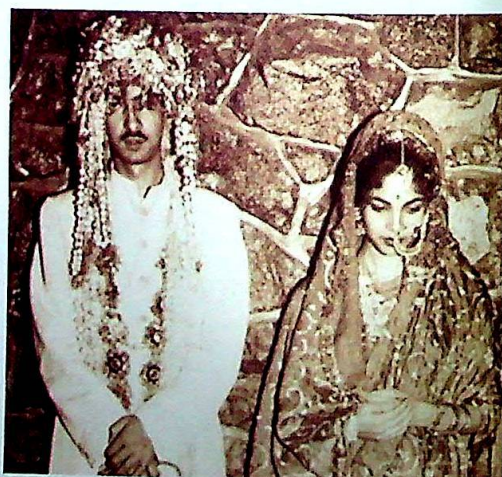
Vijay with G M Sadiq



Kiran's feet being adorned by her Tayeeji on her bridal day



Kiran bedecked in flower jewellery as a traditional



Vijay & Kiran, the newly weds



Tirath & Thakur Harnam Singh Pathania



Mrs. & Mr. M K Kidwai (Midu Bhai and Begum Aziza). J&K's first chief secretary and Tirath's close friend



Maqsood Ali



Tirath Ram with Maqsood, Pal Narboo, Pinto, Yana & Mr. Obersaul



Agha Muzaffar, Shammi, Vimla Soni, M. Kidwai, Aleema, Nimmi, Padma Gauri, D P Dhar, Meher Pestonjee, Mr. Sahni. Seated second from left, Surinder Gauri & Prem Soni



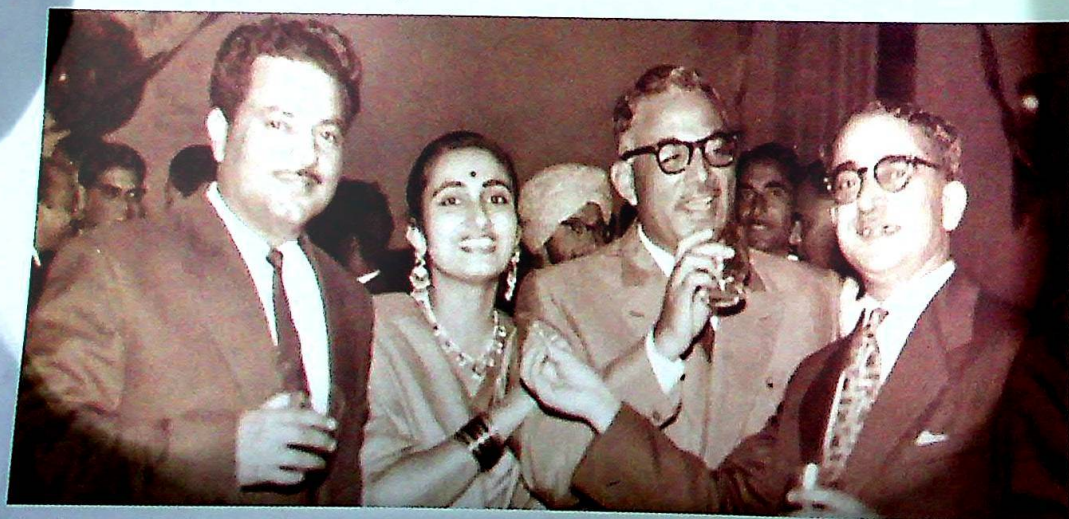
Tirath with Svetoslav Roerich & Devika Rani



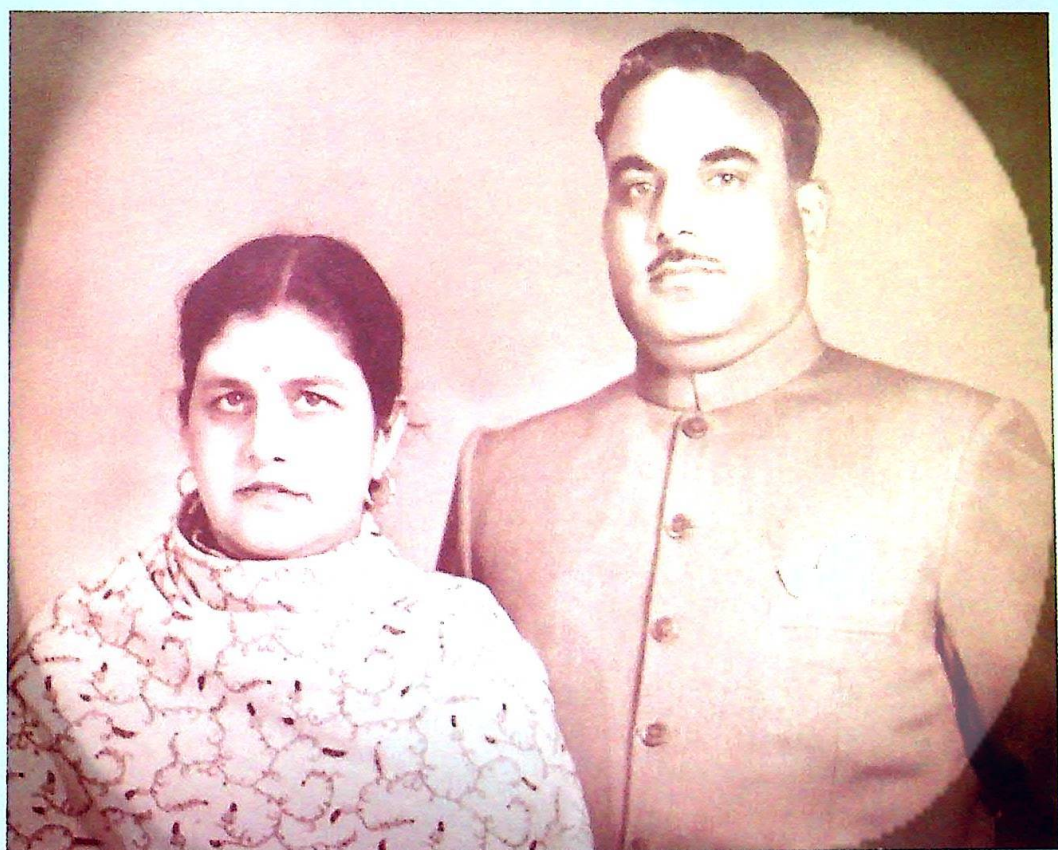
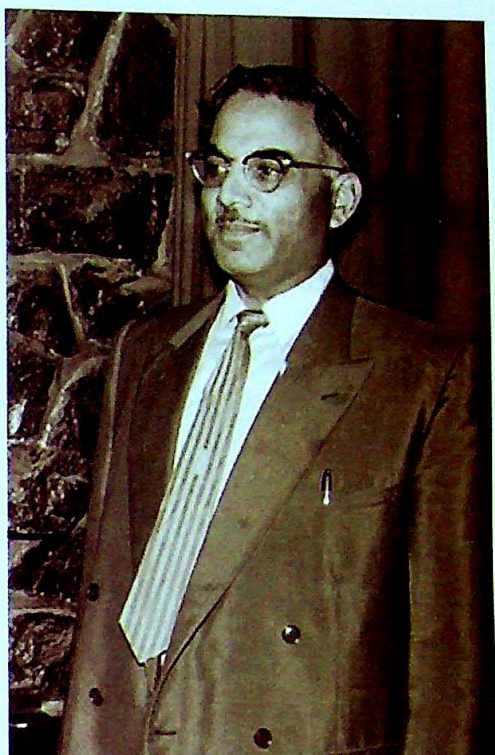
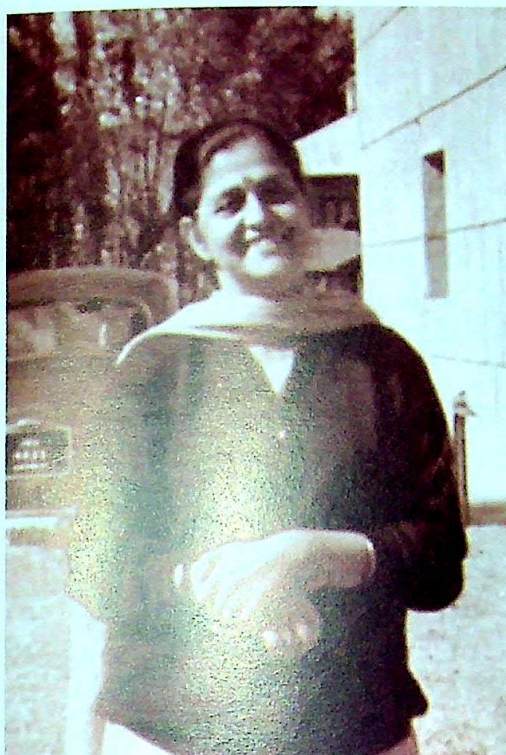
Ahmad Sahib, Agha Nasir, Dr. Ali Jan and S. K. Raina



Vijay Lakshmi, Krishan Lal, Amina, Tirath, Indira, Vimla, Biji, Satya, Bansi Suri & Veeran. Seated - Renu, Anand, Geeta & Anju



Dr. Naseer, Vimla Soni, Tirath and Dr. Ali Jan





Early Ventures

The first venture of the firm was the purchase of a small piece of land in the village of Kuthi, near the town of Srinagar. The land was purchased for the purpose of building a house for the firm. The house was built and the firm moved into it. The firm then started to build up its business and to expand its operations. It did this by purchasing more land and by building more houses. It also started to build up its stock of goods and to sell these goods to the public. The firm's business grew and it became one of the leading firms in the town of Srinagar.

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Part - II

The Business

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7 Early Ventures

The Second World War was raging ferociously and the British were facing defeats on almost every front. The Germans in Africa and the Japanese in Asia were now threateningly close to grab the "jewel in the crown". To save their most precious colony, the British had to act fast to raise an army almost overnight. They were so hard pressed that they offered commissions more liberally to "natives" in the Indian Army.

The time had come to relax the rules they had laid down on the basis of the martial race theory. According to this theory Indians were divided into two categories - the martial and the non-martial tribes. The British-led Indian army hired men only from the designated martial races like Sikhs, Gurkhas, Dogras and so on. Tirath as a member of a non-martial race, never stood a chance to get into this coveted service.

The pre World War II era was the military's golden period. It was considered the most glamorous job a young man could hope to land. Only boys from the families of nawabs and rajas got commissions as Lieutenants. But now the Empire needed cannon fodder and that too in large numbers. Therefore they changed the stringent rules to recruit as many able-bodied men as possible.

It was during this time that Tirath was on the look out for new business opportunities, but was not sure what exactly would suit him. People advised him to open a restaurant in Amirakadal, like his friend Roshan Vohra had. However, Tirath had little inclination those days for the hospitality business. He actually scorned people who took it up. Little did he realize that one day he himself would own hotels. On his father-in-law's advice, Tirath quietly applied for the post of Emergency Commissioned Officer without informing Satya or Biji.

Besides Tirath, Satya's cousin Bakshi Manohar and his friends Hamid Khan and Inayat-Ulla-Khan from Muzaffarabad and Gilgit, respectively, had also applied and all four duly appeared for an interview before one General Noyce at

Rawalpindi. In his application Tirath had named Sir P.H. Clutterbuck as a reference since he had been the Forest Minister and the Chief Conservator of Forests when Tirath had served as a Kuth Supervisor in the state. Gen. Noyce asked Tirath a question about Clutterbuck and was obviously satisfied with the reply.

To another question about any adventurous event which might have befallen him, Tirath told of his capture of smugglers in the Kuth forest and of when he had shot the leopard near Muzaffarabad Fort and sustained a mauled left arm.

That very day, Inayatullah Khan and Tirath were declared selected. Bakshi Sahib was overjoyed that his son-in-law was now part of the most coveted and glamorous service in the country. But when he broke the news at home, Biji was upset that her husband was encouraging the young man to sign his death warrant. Satya started crying bitterly. Reminders from Rawalpindi came in that he should immediately report at Mhow (in Madhya Pradesh) for training. Although Tirath could not bear to see Satya in tears, he was resolved to go, when Mahatma Gandhi sent out a message to patriotic young Indian men to desist from serving as cannon fodder for the British. He decided not to accept his commission.

Inayatullah however did join up and was to eventually retire as a Lt. General in the Pakistan Army whereas Hamid declined to accept the commission when it was finally offered at a time when the British were facing defeat on every front. Hamid's comments were typical: "Now that the bastards are getting the beating of their lives and there are German torpedos in both sea and sky, they have sent for the likes of me to try to get them out of the jam. For God's sake, tell me, why should I go to their help now?"

After marriage Tirath left Satya with her parents in Bandipur and set out to Srinagar in quest of work. He had resigned from his job as Kuth Supervisor before the wedding, not wishing to in any way embarrass his father-in-law in his position as Divisional Forest Officer.

In fact, he wanted to find a job unconnected in any manner to the forest department, but at that point, that was the only trade he knew.

Leaving a prestigious job was close to sacrilege in those days. How could a man with a family to feed even think of leaving a steady government job? However, Tirath was not an ordinary man. At this point in life he had nothing but his formidable guts and his considerable experience as a forest officer.

At this critical juncture, a very small contract was put up for tender by the Conservator of Forests, Kashmir Circle – none other than Bakshi Devi Saran. The contract involved the sale of sawn and unsawn timber left behind in the Bandi Askote Compartment of Karnah Range, Muzaffarabad Division, by the Kuthialas (one of the wealthiest families of timber merchants in Kashmir) who had been working the area but could not take out all the timber within the specified period.

Tirath drew upon all his knowledge and experience of the forest and put in a primary bid of Rs. 1,50,000. As it was the only tender, Bakshi Sahib rejected it and advertised again. Again Tirath's was the only tender, so Bakshi Sahib forwarded it to Sir P.H. Clutterbuck who was then the Chief Conservator as well as the Minister Incharge of Forests and left it to his discretion. Bakshi Sahib was not keen that Tirath be awarded the tender. Being a very proud and honourable officer he did not want to face even a vague charge of nepotism, even though extra diligence had been observed in the tender process. Sir Clutterbuck was however delighted that a contender had at least come on the scene and Tirath was allocated this compartment. He, however, put in a condition that Tirath should remove this timber during a fairly short period.

Such tight deadlines were given for the reason that timber left behind in the forests became a fire hazard. When Tirath reached the spot he found to his delight that at least 26,000 first class sleepers of deodar as well as a good number of sleepers of unsawn timber were lying about waiting to be claimed.

As he had been allowed only a short period in which to remove the timber, Tirath let the logs be and immediately launched the sawn sleepers into the Kishan Ganga. He accompanied the floating contractor all the way on foot along the Kishan Ganga to Domel and then by the Jhelum to the catching depot in Jhelum town, now in Pakistan: a total distance of not less than 200 miles. Tirath made this long trip on song, hardly breaking his stride, in anticipation of the windfall.

This tender was so crucial to Tirath's fortunes because though there was virtually no aspect of this business that he had not personally experienced, this was the first time he had wagered a fairly large sum of money with the confidence that one way or the other he would recover it. Always convinced that fortune favours the brave, he had in any case little to lose, with nothing as yet to his name.

Unfortunately, the Jhelum was in spate and Tirath lost more than half his first class sleepers. The loss of over half of the material taught Tirath his first management principle. Never count your chickens before they hatch. Now faced with certain bankruptcy he was at a loss for ideas.

However, Tirath decided that he would not quit without exhausting all options. He met the DFO at the Depot, Pandit Munshi Ram, and told him that he had lost half his timber to the raging waves of the Jhelum and that even though nature had not been charitable to him, he had no intention of backing out. He said that he would be greatly obliged if he was given a chance to recoup his money. The DFO saw the burning integrity in those young eyes and was secretly happy that a new player had entered this business. Munshi knew that new entrants were needed to break the stranglehold of the established giants who were riding roughshod over the local bureaucracy.

Munshi had a chat with the passing officer, Muzaffar Ali Khan, about the matter and he too shared Munshi's notion of creating a second line of contractors. Both of them knew that the best sleepers belonged to the railways and that they were also the worst paymasters. If Tirath's sleepers were picked up by the railways, he would be doomed. Muzaffar was feared in the entire Jhelum Depot. His aggressive demeanour and abusive language reduced people to nervous wrecks.

However, impressed by Tirath's zeal, Muzaffar, for some reason, decided to help the rookie businessman.

The next day, knowing that the sleepers had been cleared for the railways he barged into the depot and asked for the man who had cleared the consignment. The man hurriedly came forward, thinking he would be commended by 'Muzaffar the Terrible' for good work. Instead Muzaffar Ali launched such a brutal verbal attack on him that the poor man was pulverized.

The Pathan with a terrible temper was on a mission totally out of character. Within no time the first class sleepers were rejected. The news spread like wildfire. Tirath's sleepers, that were now stored in Mulraj Sawhney's depot, were sold to one Sardar Kripal Singh in the open market. The demon of the Jhelum Depot proved to be an angel for Tirath and taught him the second law of business. Destiny has a strange sense of humour and one never knows which stranger may come to one's rescue. God had clearly ordained success for Tirath's first venture and instead of going bankrupt, he made a handsome profit.

The success of his first contract greatly encouraged Tirath to turn to business as his future occupation. Soon after, he was able to secure a contract for the construction of a two-mile stretch of road on the eight mile strategic link planned between Uri on the Srinagar-Rawalpindi highway with Hajipeer on the Uri-Poonch road. It was on this job that Tirath put every lesson imbibed from his father on the dignity of labour into stark practice. He went to work along with his road-laying gangs and did not shy away from handling a crowbar or a shovel. He learned how to get the best out of his workers, injecting a useful sense of fun in the project by offering a bonus to competition winners.

Tirath was competing with the giants of the construction business of his time. Realising that by saving time, profit margins could be increased, he devised an ingenious method to inspire his work force, advice for which today's corporates would pay a fortune to management consultants. The labourers were divided into two groups and one was led by Tirath himself. At the time of roll call, the two

teams would decide a certain target and work to achieve it. The team that was ahead at the end of the day would get *gur* as a token prize. This created a healthy competition amongst the two groups. Many times Tirath would deliberately let his team lose so that the morale of the other team remained high. Any team led by Tirath could not easily lose otherwise.

An interesting fact was that another construction company (headed by Kanwar Sen Sethi) had declared a weekly paid holiday. As a result Sethi's labourers would wash their clothes and the next day one could see that they were more interested in protecting their washed clothes than in working on the construction site. Taking a cue from his rival's experience, Tirath decided to work all seven days of the week and finished off his project in record time.

The result was that whereas old hands like the firms of Sardar Chanda Singh and Kanwar Sen Sethi and Brothers lost money in the adjoining sections, Tirath alone was able to make a clean and sizeable profit on his stretch of the road.

In the late 1940s, Rai Bahadur Sham Sunder Lal, a grand old man, was head of the Department of Panchayats and Dehat Sudhar (Village Administration and Rural Development). His department was under pressure to construct a number of rural roads and a great many wooden *kuthars* (grain silos) all over Kashmir.

As luck would have it, with his experience and burgeoning infrastructure, Tirath was able to secure the contracts for most of the *kuthars* and completed them all well on time. As per the terms of the contract, he was to receive payment after his work was attested and verified by the Engineer Incharge, Abdul Rashid Khan. This was duly done and his written report was sent to the higher authorities. But before he was paid, the Pakistan-backed tribal raids on Kashmir commenced and Khan hurriedly migrated to Pakistan. Areas where Tirath had done work thus became enemy-occupied territory and continue to be so even now. Like many others, Tirath had to deal with the financial as well as personal devastation of war.

By now the department was headed by the social activist-reformer Kashyap Bandhu, a legendary figure for his integrity, drive and innovative approach to rural

development through the *Halla Sheri* movement which mobilised rural volunteers to build country roads, irrigation channels and tree plantations. He was a close associate of the charismatic politician, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah (the then Prime Minister of the state).

In the case of Tirath's payment, the concerned secretary of the state government was well known for his chronic negativity regarding every problem referred to him for comment or decision. Unsurprisingly, he wrote a note on Tirath's papers that no payment should be made until all the work had been rechecked and verified after the areas occupied by the enemy had been liberated. However, Kashyap Bandhu over-ruled the secretary and ordered the payment of Rs 1,90,000 to be made immediately to Tirath on the basis of the verification already made by the Engineer In-charge. By way of fatherly advice he told Tirath to take his money and quit Kashmir: which Tirath, however, refused to do despite the traumatic closure of the Muzaffarabad chapter in the Amla family chronicles.

Meanwhile, the Indian army had moved into J&K state late in the autumn of 1947 at the request of its people and its Maharaja to defend its integrity after the Instrument of Accession was signed between the state and the central government. Consequently, there was a spurt in construction activity to provide suitable accommodation for the defense personnel. Tirath made a handsome profit in this enterprise too, constructing a few army barracks at the cantonment in Tatoo Ground, Srinagar. He was ably assisted by his nephews Krishan Lal and Ved.

His big civil contracts came about in 1955 as an 'A' Class contractor - builder when, in partnership with Ghani Sahib of Natipura, Srinagar, Tirath undertook the construction of a few bridges on the Pathankot Jammu Highway at Tarna, Sambha and other points, besides the bridge at Arwani and the police station at Khanabal (both in Anantnag district), the youth hostel at Pahalgam and a link road at Ramban in Doda. All these projects were accomplished under the supervision of his nephew, Shyam Lal Amla. Tirath had built an enviable team of builders - Haji Jamaal, Vasta Russala and many others who faithfully worked on all his buildings including the hotel and cinema which were to follow later.

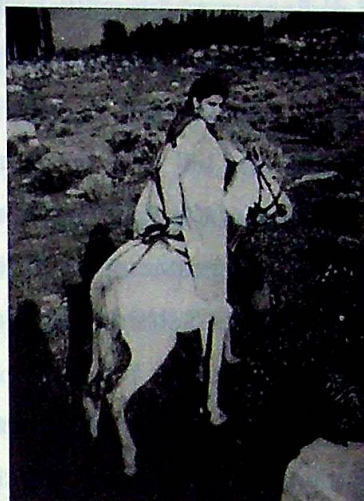
The Horrors Of 1947

Barely two years later, India gained freedom after a long and bloody struggle, on August 15, 1947 and Kashmir celebrated with the rest of the country. The euphoria evaporated soon after when Hazara tribals, with the active support of the Pakistani army, launched a brutal and murderous attack on Muzaffarabad in the early hours of October 22, 1947.

Looting, arson and killings engulfed the town all day and in the evening the tribals rounded up survivors and pushed them across the Kishan Ganga on the road to the North West Frontier Province. Here they started separating the women from the men, confirming the worst fears of the survivors that the ladies would now be taken captive to the tribal areas. The men were in a helpless position, being outnumbered by armed tribals. The women panicked and several jumped to their death in the rushing waters of the Kishan Ganga. Some consumed poison meant for killing stray dogs. The quantity of poison available with them was not sufficient to cause instantaneous death and some of them, writhing in agony, had to be killed by various other means.

Tirath's family lost seven members that day: his sister, Janki Devi; his eldest sister-in-law, Jai Devi; nephew; Ram Lal's wife Kunni and daughter Kanti and three nieces, Rakhi, Pushpa and Krishna. The most tragic death was that of the lovely, vivacious Krishna, who had been married very recently. The poison she swallowed was not enough to kill her so she swallowed crushed glass, which caused internal bleeding and plunged her in great agony. She then implored her brother Faqir Chand and husband Raghunath to help her die, somehow. This horrific task was finally accomplished by the men, who strangled her with her own dupatta: One of the most tragic episodes of that epoch, that still haunts Tirath, who was then in Srinagar.

This remains the most traumatic period in Tirath's life and that of the entire Amla family. A time of quick, terrible decisions from which there was no retreat, for



Krishna, the new bride who died tragically as a victim of partition



Ved, Krishna and Rakhi in Muzaffarabad on the terrace of the Amla house

death seemed certain and dishonour, traditionally embodied in women, seemed worse. The men were distraught, diminished and deeply wounded at being unable to save their womenfolk. To this day, Tirath, his surviving sister Durga and the rest of the family feel the ache and tell over the names of their dead, keeping them alive in the hearts and minds of the grandchildren of the clan through story and photograph. Today, with all his brothers and sisters gone, it is only Durga, who lives in Jammu, with whom Tirath shares the oldest memories.

Meanwhile, Tirath's elder brother Lala Gian Chand, was on the run on account of being a Hindu in a Muslim-majority area in those communally volcanic times. He was sheltered by a Muslim woman, Gulabo, at Gotar village, about nine miles from Muzaffarabad, en route to the locally famous hill station of Peer Chinassi at 9,000', home to the much-venerated *mazar* or shrine of the Sufi saint, Hazrat Shah Hussain. In these interesting circumstances, their goodwill soon turned to love, especially when Gulabo proved to be a woman of great character.

After a ceasefire had been declared between India and Pakistan through the good offices of the UN Security Council, the International Red Cross proposed the repatriation of surviving non-Muslims from Muzaffarabad to India. Tirath's nephews, Krishan Lal and Faqir Chand, went to the village where their uncle Gian Chand had taken shelter. The Muslim lady, Gulabo, behaved in a very gracious manner and declared that Gian Chand was free to go and also handed over the family jewelry that he had given her for safekeeping. Gian Chand was so touched by this gesture that he refused point-blank to be repatriated to India. Eventually he married the lady and had a son by her. He is now buried in the graveyard near Sarkari Bagh in Muzaffarabad and Tirath hopes to visit it, with the recent reopening of the bus route.

Survivors of Tirath's family who were repatriated to India were sent to various refugee camps in Dharamshala (now in Himachal Pradesh), Almora (now in Uttaranchal), Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh) and so on. Tirath went to these camps in

turn, gathered his truncated family and brought them to Srinagar where he tried his best to settle them all by providing them accommodation and financial help, besides employment in his various ventures.

In the words of his nephew Faqir Chand Amla, "Ours was a large joint family in Muzaffarabad town now in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, which got displaced and disintegrated during the upheaval of 1947. The whole family suffered heavy loss of life and property during the 1947 raids. Fortunately our respected Uncle Shri Tirath Ram Amla ji happened to be in Srinagar in connection with the business at the time of this upheaval which perhaps was a blessing in disguise as it helped our family to reunite. He was a pillar of strength for everybody.

Respected Uncle got some forest on Government Lease and called all of us to Srinagar to join him in his forest lease business. Respected Uncle Tirath Ram ji also called other relatives from Camp to join in his forest lease and transport business. He helped all his nephews in getting admission in different colleges and schools in India and thus tried to unite the family which had got displaced during the upheaval of 1947.

He even went out of the way to help his Muslim friend Abdul Hamid Khan to cross the LOC border way back in 1947 with the help of the Army to unite him with his family in Muzaffarabad, which shows his secular character."

The 'filmi' manner in which Tirath helped his friend Hamid cross over to POK where his family was at a time when it was impossible to do so, is a whole another story as is the heights to which Hamid rose thereafter. Tirath's old friend C.S. Sehgal (Charan) says in his letter, "Chachaji is a straightforward person so he has no interest to indulge in political manoeuvres. He feels politics has been thrust upon him. This he has written in a letter to one of his best friends, Raja Hamid Khan Sahib, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, which they call Azad Kashmir. This letter he sent to him through me when I went to

Muzaffarabad with my wife to show her a glimpse of my native place in 1989.” Says Tirath’s nephew, Dr. Bansi Lal Amla, of whose accomplishments Tirath is really proud, “Back in Muzaffarabad, we were a family of landowners, wholesale trading and money management. Uncle was the first person in the family to go to college and graduate with a BA degree. He became a role model for the younger generations in the family. He opened a pathway for us to pursue college education. He constantly encouraged us to set and pursue our goals in a single-minded and determined way. He also motivated the family to look past the traditional trading practices and move on to more exciting and challenging business opportunity. He introduced them to ventures like forest leases, roads and building contracts. This exposure was key in initiating the family into developing innovative ways of business promotion. During the upheavals of 1947, the family faced with many personal tragedies, was forced to leave their home and everything else they knew and loved. Without resources, the family moved to Srinagar, Jammu and other parts of India and looked forward to resettlement. It was in this difficult time that my Uncle, with true strength of conviction and concern, started many new ventures and guided the family to stand on their feet.”

However, there was no looking back now at the happy years at Muzaffarabad. In the blink of an eye, it had become a foreign country, forbidden to the Amlas and their brethren.

Forest Leases

When Tirath looks back at his business history, it is the name "Forest Compartment 4/C Mawar of Langet Division (Kashmir)" that glows in letters of fire. It was the lease of this particular forest that proved pivotal in his life and stands out as the single most important event that helped mould and shape the entire landscape of his financial future, the classic "first big break" that every successful businessman gratefully remembers.

Back in the late 1940s and 50s, the economy of the state of J&K was obviously in shambles due to the tribal raids of 1947 and the traumatic events that followed. After the cease-fire agreement signed with Pakistan, the state began to limp back to normalcy and economic recovery with the Centre's help. Besides tourism, its rich forests were the main source of revenue and so the Forest Department, under the able guidance of its head of department, Thakur Harnam Singh Pathania, began to rehabilitate its operations in right earnest.

A keen sportsman, an outstanding athlete and above all one of the greatest foresters India has produced, Thakur Harnam Singh Pathania was the first modern Indian to take over the Forest Department in the state of Jammu & Kashmir in the year 1944. Prior to that, ever since English rule began, it had always been an Englishman who held the coveted position.

Forest working and the timber trade were the backbone of the state's economy until 1947 when they were completely shattered as a consequence of Pak-backed tribal raids. J&K lost some of its most valuable coniferous forests in the Kishan Ganga catchment as well as its traditional trading markets like Jhelum town, to Pakistan. It was Shri Pathania who by dint of his courage, intimate knowledge of the state's forests and his practical approach, rehabilitated the forest working and the timber trade, thus contributing to the stability of the state's economy at that most difficult hour.

As a symbol of his vision, Shankarcharya Hill, right in the center of Srinagar, which was once denuded and barren is now lush, green and soothing to the eye. It was Shri Pathania who in the mid-30s undertook to clothe it with evergreen trees and plants.

He expired at the age of 90 in the year 1990, but will be ever remembered for his honesty, integrity, hard work and intimate knowledge of each and every forest compartment of the state.

In the pre-1937 period, Thakur Harnam Singh Pathania was suspect in the eyes of some of the most important political leaders to rule after the end of the Dogra rule in 1948. Bakshi Ghulam Sadiq Sahib and Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beig were hostile to Shri Pathania mainly because of the Pathania family's unflinching loyalty to the Dogra dynasty.

It speaks volumes for the integrity, honesty, and efficiency of Shri Pathania that when Sadiq Sahib and Beig Sahib became ministers holding portfolios of the Forest Department, they were so impressed with Shri Pathania's performance that they became his staunch admirers and reposed full and complete faith in his work. Sadiq Sahib went so far as to issue orders that each and every decision regarding the Forest Department, particularly in allotment of forest leases should be as per Shri Pathania's recommendation and that his reports should be accepted in toto on all such matters.

Prior to 1947, Shri Pathania was at odds with Bakshi Devi Saran, then serving as a Conservator of Forests. Tirath, as Bakshi Sahib's son-in-law had naturally become anti-Pathania and had been indulging in a campaign against him. However, 1947 turned Tirath's world topsy-turvy. He had no job and no money. Because of his happy experience of forest working in the past, he decided to put in all his available resources and hard work in resuming forest work. That idea however, was fraught with innumerable difficulties because of his past behaviour towards Shri Pathania.

One day he took courage and went to see Shri Pathania at his residence at Srinagar. He explained his plight to him and expressed regrets for past misunderstandings and told him that he would like to resume his forest work provided Shri Pathania promised to forget the past.

It goes to the credit of that great man that Harnam Singh Pathania immediately promised to extend all help to him on any forest venture which Tirath undertook. That meeting proved crucial for Tirath as it launched him on a career which eventually pushed him to the top in the economic, social and political life of the state.

Accordingly, a retired forest ranger, Pandit Vid Lal, approached Tirath with a proposal to bid for one of the forest leases advertised. He offered to supervise the fieldwork if Tirath secured the contract. Tirath agreed and asked him to thoroughly inspect a couple of forests and then recommend the amount that he should tender. After a few days the ranger came back with his report and recommended that Tirath should tender for '4/C Mawar', a forest that he knew well, having retired from that very range. He also related an interesting incident that occurred when he was inspecting the forest and assessing its price. He had encountered a mysterious old fakir who declared that he knew the ranger had come on behalf of the "lala" and that he should carry back a message that he had already "gifted" 4/C Mawar to the lala on lease.

In hindsight, the fakir's words proved prophetic. Tirath's tender was duly accepted, as it happened to be the highest, although it was half the amount suggested by Vid Lal. (Though Tirath unfailingly asks for advice, he never blindly follows it, his gut instinct always proving correct). This was Tirath's first big business undertaking and true to form, he himself supervised and directed all operations by going to live in Harel Village at the foot of the forest. In due course, all the marked trees were felled, converted into sleepers and floated down to Doabagh via the Langet and Pohru rivers. This lease gave Tirath a lot of money and not only provided him with capital and experience for more ventures but also convinced him that his future lay in forest leases.

Thereafter, it became an almost annual ritual for Tirath to secure one or two additional forest leases. Gradually, his forest operations came to cover every nook and corner of the state including not only the Kashmir Valley but also some of the remotest parts of Jammu like Marwah (Kishtwar), Gulabgarh (Reasi) and Marmat (Doda). The number of forests, the leases of which Tirath had the good fortune to secure, exceeded two dozen including the following :

- (a) 36 Mawar, Langet
- (b) 20-21 Mawar, Langet
- (c) 6 & 7 Kuthar, Anantnag
- (d) 37 Doleri, Rajwar, Langet
- (e) Doodganga Forest, Shopian
- (f) Bosian 1/C, Harel, Baramulla
- (g) 17 & 18, Rafiabab, Harel
- (h) Boniyar Forest, J.V. Division
- (i) Marwah Forest (Kishtwar)
- (j) Marmat Forest (Doda)
- (k) Gulabgarh Forest (Reasi)

Not that business was a smooth ride down the river. In a few cases the trees sold as 'fit' by the Forest Department turned out to be totally rotten when felled. In the past, the government of the time, particularly during Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's regime, took a sympathetic and pragmatic view of the situation and compensated the badly hit forest lessee by granting relief in cash or alternate markings in some other forest. Tirath, too, had to face similar problems several times but was able to overcome each crisis without too much damage.

Nor was it always a prank of Nature: sometimes the fault lay with the Forest Officers who marked and classified trees for sale incorrectly due to incompetence or laziness. Sogam Forest, leased by Tirath, was a classic example of human negligence. Stumps of old fallen trees, hardly six to eight feet in height, and visibly rotten to the core, even to a casual layman, had been marked and classified as

“Deodar First Class fit”, by a Forest Officer who was senior in length of service but professionally a nincompoop. As luck would have it, he happened to be related to Tirath.

Otherwise, every forest lease, big or small, proved lucky for Tirath and he made handsome profits in every venture. As in the case of 4/C Mawar, it was Tirath's policy to visit every forest personally and guide all aspects of the operations. The forests in the Kashmir valley were easy to visit but the Jammu forests were all located in very remote areas and could be reached only on foot after difficult marches of forty to fifty miles. Thus, to get to Marwah forest (Kishtwar), Tirath had to trek nearly 40 miles across the Margan Pass, about 14,000 ft. above sea level. The timber from this forest had to be floated down to Akhnoor first along the Marwah river and then down the great, roaring Chenab. This operation normally took around six months. From Akhnoor, the timber went by truck, first to Jammu Depot and then to Pathankot for sale.

Similarly, Gulabgarh forest in Jammu could be reached only on foot after a long, tiring and hazardous journey of about 45 miles from Ramban. The sawn timber from this forest had to be floated down the Gulabgarh Nalla up to Arnas and then down the Chenab to Akhnoor, an endeavour which took almost five months to accomplish.

Tirath's brother, Bishandas, would go to each forest that Tirath got a lease for. He would set up his home there to keep an eye on the work in the forest. So much so that his young nephews and nieces called him “Junglewale Tayaji”. His younger brother Harichand was stationed in Pathankot where Tirath had made a depot to sell timber. His nephew Faqir Chand, cousins Attarchand and Brijlal were all helping him where ever they were needed. It was a tremendous family effort. Lala Lachman Das was the only brother who was not involved in any business. He is remembered as a father figure by the family for the affection and care he showed everyone.

Amidst these exciting ventures, Tirath recalls a missed opportunity that could have proved another '4/C Mawar' in his life. He was once on the lookout for a suitable forest to compensate for the faulty markings in another forest lease at Langet. I was then the Divisional Forest Officer and was set to tour the Mahau Mangat forests of the Banihal Range and invited Tirath to accompany me. When we went around the Mahau Mangat, Tirath was dumbstruck and could hardly believe what he saw. All around him mighty deodars stood tall and stately in their pristine splendour. Supported on tall, clean boles of immense girth, their crowns appeared to touch the very heavens. These forests were clearly a gold mine, as I instantly recognised and advised Tirath. Though Tirath agreed, a twist of fate made him opt instead for another forest in Lolab.

Subsequently the Mahau Mangat forest played its predicted pivotal role in catapulting the then unknown KC business group into the big league as one of Jammu's premier business families - just as 4/C Mawar had done in Tirath's case.

But Tirath's entrepreneurial profile was by no means completed yet.

Broadway; *Cinema, Hotels*

In 1953 Tirath was on the look out for a small piece of land in Delhi, on which to build a winter home in the plains for his family. A few plots of land were being put to tender at Asaf Ali Road by the Delhi Administration, an area touted as the new development abutting Delhi's golden mile, which ended those days at the southern edge of Darya Ganj.

Tirath successfully bid for one such plot and only after obtaining the land, discovered that the site was earmarked for raising a residential-cum-commercial building not less than five stories high. Transferring the land to any other party was banned. Circumstances thus forced Tirath to change his initial plans. Having disdained the hospitality business in Kashmir earlier, he now took cognizance of the incipient Delhi boom. There were only two modern hotels in Delhi then: the Maidens and the Imperial. Clearly, there was room for another, especially on Asaf Ali Road which formed the interesting cusp between the old commercial district of the Walled City of Delhi and the new, Lutyens-designed business district of Connaught Place.

Actively encouraged by Rai Bahadur Oberoi - the Grand Old Man of Indian hoteliers, who had just started making a name for himself and was ready to take the new hotel on rent (à la the Imperial), Tirath was advised instead by a rival competitive faction (Lala Ram Pershad and others) to hire managers and run it himself. Tirath's already mesmeric grey eyes blazed with the thrill of this new chase as he looked about him for a suitable architect to give shape to this fresh venture. Strangely, there was not one Indian architect then with experience in designing or building a modern hotel. Tirath finally took on a young professional whose quiet demeanour belied his bold modern mind, trained at Harvard: A.P. Kanvinde, who went on to become a legend in his lifetime.

Tirath's dreams rapidly became a reality between 1954, when construction began and April 1956, when Hotel Broadway first slid its art deco doors open for business.

Typically, Tirath devoted his personal time and attention to ensure its early completion. He remembers the satisfaction he felt each time a floor's slab was cast. He would pitch his *charpoy* on it and spend the night under the stars, barely able to wait for the sun to rise so that he could begin on the next floor. When the Broadway became the third fully air-conditioned hotel in Delhi set up on modern lines, it created such a flutter that A.P. Kanvinde was later asked to design not just the Hotel Broadway in Srinagar but all of Tirath's residential properties.

Says Tirath about his dear friend Kanvinde, "When I was referred to Mr. Kanvinde, who had recently started his practice in Delhi, I was told that in a very short time he had earned such a flattering reputation in his profession that Maulana Azad (then a leading member of the Central Cabinet), had remarked that whenever Mr. Kanvinde offered to undertake a project there was no need to call for tenders. I found Mr. Kanvinde extremely polite and obliging and he prepared the requisite plans against a modest fee. My first contact with Mr. Kanvinde as a client soon grew and blossomed into close friendship. After that all my important constructions including Hotel Broadway, my residential houses, Broadway Cinema and so on at Srinagar were the fruit of Mr. Kanvinde's labour."

Their professional acquaintance, as was now Tirath's pattern in his relationships, ripened into a very close friendship and Tirath mourns Kanvinde's demise decades later with a genuine sense of loss. His children Sanjay and Suneeta are today equally close to Tirath's children and part of his extended family.

Tirath remembers how his old friend Mr. Obershaul's wife Jana scoured the markets of Delhi looking for furnishing and helping decorate the hotel in modern "European style". He mourns her recent death and the fact that he doesn't get to see enough of Jana's lovely daughter Maya who, along with her husband Errol, now lives in Canada.

Tirath's sister Durga's son-in-law Shyam Sehgal (married to his favourite neice Kripa) was a big help to him during the construction of the hotel and has always

been a great asset to him in the dealership business and to Krishan at Hotel Broadway, Srinagar. Tirath's late nephew Jagan Amla helped Krishan and Tirath tremendously in the initial years of operating Broadway. Tirath was also always fortunate to have dedicated and capable managers like Mr. Kochhar, who ran the hotel for many years and thereafter Mr. C.L. Sharma who helped Vijay Lakshmi run the property till her son Rohit returned from the U.S.

Hotel Broadway, the capital's first modern American style hotel, pioneered a lot of firsts in Delhi, beginning with bread and breakfast for Rs. 15. With Tirath's inherently hospitable nature, the hotel became an extension of his own home with the difference being that now even strangers who stayed as guests were accorded the same level of welcome. His philosophy went deep into the psyche of his staff and the repeat visits of third generation guests even today is testament to the fact that an enduring service culture can be built through successive generations of employees.

Hotel Broadway, New Delhi, had excellent staff, handpicked by Tirath himself in the 50s and 60s. Half a century later, with its own internal union, the Delhi Broadway has created a record of sorts for industrial and staff satisfaction and guest service excellence. This is what probably led to it receiving the coveted award of being India's first ISO 9002 Hotel Restaurant and Banquet Facility certification in 1996, from RWTUV Germany, beating the biggest names in the hospitality industry to this recognition. It has been run since the 70s by Tirath's elder daughter Vijay Lakshmi Khattar, the Managing Partner, who so ably and maternally feels for her people that the staff would rather trust her fairness than any union's. Tirath feels there has always been something unique about the harmony between the management and the staff and perhaps in the overall *vastu*, at Hotel Broadway. This feeling is affirmed by Vijay Lakshmi's son, Rohit, who finds deep peace in his old Broadway office when he comes over from his larger activities at the India Habitat Centre, where his company operates the hospitality facilities. He too takes comfort in the presence and continuing loyalty of the

dwindling grey-haired veterans from his grandfather's days. Taking inspiration from his grandfather's philosophy, Rohit's company is appropriately called 'Old World Hospitality Private Limited.'

Meanwhile, seeing the success of the Broadway in Delhi, G.M. Sadiq, the then Chief Minister of J&K and a frequent visitor to the Broadway when in the Capital, told Tirath how desperately tourism in the state needed promotion. He wanted Tirath to put up a Hotel Broadway in Srinagar with the condition that it would be as smart and sparkling as the Delhi Broadway.

Accordingly, Tirath exchanged his palatial Srinagar house which was besides Nedou's Hotel, for a plot of land housing the transport office. Kanvinde got to work and the hotel began to rise, but money ran out. At that time, Grindlays Bank had an Irish regional director, Paddy O' Gormon, who knew Tirath fairly well and helped out with a loan. But the beautiful new building needed more.

It was around then that the Indian Tobacco Company (ITC) led by Ajit Haksar entered the hotel business and through D.P. Dhar's good offices, decided to take over the Srinagar Broadway. All terms were settled and the final takeover meeting was scheduled in Delhi when the ITC financial officer lowered the agreed figure by two lakhs. This paltry, eleventh-hour short-changing was enough to make Tirath walk out of the meeting and decide not to sell on principle. There was a big argument with D.P., but Tirath had made up his mind. Hotel Broadway became the first five-star hotel in the state and under the able management of Krishan (who had studied hotel management in the U.K.), was soon to become the only competitor that the Oberoi Palace had in the valley. By the time militancy in the valley (in the early 90s) forced the family to close the hotel, it had acquired an enviable national reputation. It gladdens Tirath's heart, how courageously Krishan, Usha and their children opened the property a couple of years ago. With the changing tides in the valley he has no doubt that their fortitude will bring Broadway back to its former glory. Tirath is proud of how Krishan's two sons, Arjun and

Amit, have reset standards in hospitality in the capital too, by opening several top restaurants.

Back in the 50s, however, Tirath grinned to himself when the 'Broadway' name acquired unexpected expansion – as a cinema hall. The fact of the matter was that Tirath was mad about the movies. As a young hosteller in Srinagar, he and I would see the silent films of the thirties and admire actors like Miss Kajjan and Master Nissar, "the first man who sang well, naturally, in films," says Tirath. A film in winter meant taking blankets along to the hall and we discovered how cinema hall proprietors fooled the unread public by advertising even English films as something to local taste, say 'Laila Majnu'. In fact, two young Kashmiri lads sat halfway through an English film before departing indignantly, complaining, "This is not Lel-Majnu!"

Tirath had even fancied himself as an actor and at all of 18, managed to visit Bombay, to call on the legendary actor-singer Kundan Lal Saigal. Saigal had a relative in Srinagar, known to Tirath, who had arranged his visit to the great man's home. However, the star had promptly disillusioned him: "Go, young man. This is your age to study. This world is nothing but *dikhava* (show)!" he had cautioned Tirath away.

But how could Tirath resist owning a cinema hall when one evening, at a dinner party, Brigadier Das, the Srinagar sub-area commander, told Tirath to build a cinema in the Cantonment? All permissions would be given. Tirath had invested earlier with Bhai Anant Singh, proprietor of Srinagar's Palladium Cinema, in what was known as Jai Hind Talkies. Overnight, he began to work. A workshop for his other business, auto dealership, was run at that time by his son-in-law, Ramesh Khattar. The workshop was dismantled and a fine cinema hall constructed, designed, naturally, by A.P. Kanvinde. Wooden paneling was used for the first time and was known thereafter as Broadway paneling, while the distinctive steel fence became a genre of its own as Broadway fencing.

Since Tirath did not know how cinema halls were run, he got in touch with a friend, SK Mehta, who had a cinema and distributor network in Amritsar and Jalandhar in Punjab. In due course, Broadway Cinema opened in 1965 with the Shammi Kapoor starrer *Jungle* and went on to earn a good name not only in the state but also in the film fraternity. Due to Tirath's vision, Broadway was one of the very few cinema halls in the country that ran a full-fledged bar-and-restaurant, the 'Kolahoi'. Operated by his son-in-law Kumar (Vijay Dhar), who was ably assisted by Tirath's nephew Ved, Broadway was always the benchmark in cinema viewing in J&K. Kumar's mastery of the film business and his close friendship with the film fraternity saw innumerable star-studded premieres at the Broadway. Unfortunately Broadway Cinema was burnt down during insurgency.

Despite such setbacks, Tirath's clan lived up to his own never-say-die spirit and went on positively. Tirath is extremely proud of the tremendous effort that Kumar and Kiran have put in to open the valley's first major school in 50 years – the Delhi Public School, Srinagar, which provides the finest education to over a thousand children. This is an initiative of a trust that Kumar set up in the name of his father, D.P. Dhar. What could be more befitting a tribute to one of Kashmir's most learned patriots...

Dealerships; Relationships

(Premier, M&M, Maruti, Hindustan Motors, Escorts, Godrej, Bajaj)

The early 50s proved to be the crucible of Tirath's business fortunes in yet another way, for it was then that Seth Chunibhai, a director of Premier Automobiles Ltd. (PAL) came to Srinagar on a visit. He was a good friend of Tirath's close friend Behram Pestonjee, whose office-cum-residence was located across Residency Road from Tirath's office. Seth Chunibhai wished to extend the automobile business to J&K and was on the lookout for a suitable person to appoint as an authorized PAL dealer. He consulted Pestonjee on the matter and the latter recommended Tirath as a person of sound financial background with sizeable political and social influence. When Tirath was sounded out by Pestonjee, he agreed on the condition that Pestonjee would join him as a partner. Tirath further suggested that they should take on Pandit Trilochan Dutta as a third partner, to look after the dealership outlet at Jammu. Pestonjee agreed and so the PAL dealership was awarded to 'Tirath Ram Amla & Company'.

Whereas Pestonjee was a good friend, whom Tirath admired for his experience and straightforwardness, Dutta was adopted at the instance of D.P. Dhar. Dutta had previously resigned his bureaucratic office as DC, Poonch, in a move towards entering politics. D.P. requested Tirath to put him up in a flat above his office and also had Tirath pay Dutta's equity in the partnership.

Business had got under way, when one night Pestonjee telephoned Dutta to inform him that a convoy of Premier cars was expected to reach Srinagar late that night and that arrangements had to be made to receive it. Dutta took umbrage at having been disturbed in his sleep and shouted at Pestonjee. Though he apologized to him after Tirath's intervention next day, Pestonjee flatly refused to continue as partner. He said he could not partner a man like Dutta who valued his personal comfort above the company's interest. At that time Tirath felt that Pestonjee was being too harsh on a person who had already apologised. Today he ruefully

salutes Pestonjee's foresight, for he became embroiled in a long and bitter litigation with Trilochan Dutta years after Pestonjee's prophetic statement. It remains the one truly acrimonious episode in Tirath's career, on which he prefers not to elaborate since Dutta has long passed on.

Seth Lalchand Hirachand of Premier, however, became Tirath's staunch friend. He was one of that grand, old breed of pioneers who was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's vision and strove to live by his ideals. A warm relationship was forged between the two families, which began on Sethji's very first trip after Tirath had been appointed dealer. As Seth Lalchand's (Dada's) daughter, Sharayu Daftary, tells it:

"My parents, with all of us and our children, decided to visit Kashmir in 1962. The welcome that we got from Lala Tirath Ram was just unimaginable and can't be described. We were staying in a houseboat. Every day Chachaji (Tirath) would come and see what was required and arrange for our trips and sightseeing. He and Dada (my father) bonded magnificently from day one. Chachaji found Dada a humorous and loving man, quite contrary to the stern Chairman/MD of Premier Automobiles that he had heard of. They became fond of each other.

Dada was so floored by Chachaji's nature and his hospitality that their relationship became a family relationship in those three to four weeks - one that lasted a lifetime. Lalita Bai, my mother, was also very, very fond of Satyaji. They were all surprised at how Chachaji took care of her, in a manner unheard of and unseen anywhere else.

Gradually, it became Dada's practice to take note if Lala Tirath Ram visited the PAL office and to call him in for a chat. Though he did not interfere in the activities of the Marketing Department, he took keen interest whenever Lalaji came over, since for him Lalaji had become a family member.

Our family relationship developed. Lalaji and Lalchandji were the first generation and Viju, Kiran, Krishan, their husbands and wife and Lalchand's sons, daughters-in-law and daughter, son-in-law were the second generation and it went on to the third generation. So it just grew and grew like a banyan tree.

Viju (Vijay Lakshmi) was expecting Rohit, her first child at that time, and when she and Ramesh came to Bombay, we all were so impressed by the beauty of the couple and the nature of their whole clan; it was just indescribable, so fond and so soft-spoken and so attentive. Lalaji threw many parties and to every party Dada and his family were invited while in Srinagar. The parties were grand affairs and he was, as they said, the kingmaker of Jammu & Kashmir. He knew all the politicians and Mr. D.P. Dhar was his great, great friend. They loved each other and it was a pleasure to see them love each other like that."

The bond that Tirath and Seth Lalchand developed carried on to their children including Dada's sons Vinod and Chakor, with their beautiful wives Saryu and Champa. Sethji's daughter Sharayu, especially and her most affectionate husband Arvind Daftary (now deceased) became extremely close to the family. Sharayu is like an elder sister to Tirath's children and her three daughters Czaee, Gauri and Kavita along with their families are part of Tirath's extended family, too.

Soon after he got the PAL business, Tirath was appointed dealer by Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M) too, for their Jeeps and other products. Those days, the PAL and M&M dealerships were gold mines because these two companies enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the manufacture and sale of small cars, the Fiat and the Jeep, respectively. Both were in great demand with long waiting lists and delivery periods extending to months and even years.

When Tirath first met the enigmatic Harish Mahindra and his beautiful wife Indira, he was struck by the couple's personality and demeanour. They exuded warmth and genuine friendship. On their very first visit to Kashmir they were accompanied

by their close friend, Kashi Poddar and family. Tirath was keen that they have a good holiday. As Indira Mahindra recounts today, they were flabbergasted that Tirath simply vacated his own house and moved to its annexe, so that they could stay comfortably in the main house, especially with the Poddar family present. For Tirath, however, such acts of hospitality were very deep, strong impulses, as cultural as they were personal. A guest meant everything to him, as both nature and scripture ordained in the Sanskrit maxim, *Atithi devo bhava* (A guest is like God).

It was a memorable first visit to Kashmir for Harish and he, too, became extremely close to Tirath, to the extent that on another occasion, when Indira and Harish went abroad, they did not think twice about leaving their children, Radhika, Anand and Anuja under Tirath's care. Later, Keshub Mahindra too became a good friend of Tirath's, who has always admired the values on the strength of which Keshub has built his great company.

Tirath mourns Harish's passing away so early. Indira and her children are very close to Tirath's family. While Vijay always turned to Indira for advice at different stages in her life, Rohit says that he has learned an incredible amount from Anand, who treats him like a younger brother and is Rohit's foremost guide and mentor. It makes Tirath happy to see the friendships sown by his generation still flourish.

But Tirath's business acumen did not let him sit back and bask in complacency at having obtained two such lucrative dealerships. With his good friend Des Raj Kapoor, he set up Dee Dee Motors in Dehradun as a dealership for Ambassador cars, the same learning curve being translated to another state and another type of car. This came about through the efforts of one of Tirath's oldest friends and benefactors - S.K. Raina. When Tirath took the Hindustan Motors agency for Dehra Dun, S.K. Raina was Vice President of Hindustan Motors.

'S.K.' (as he was always referred to by his friends) played a very important role in Tirath's life. He was closely associated with the greats like Sheikh Abdullah,

Bakshi Gulam Mohammad and others. During the emergency government in 1947 headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, S.K. was appointed administrator of Jammu. S.K. had a rare quality - to go out of his way for anybody who approached him for help. Tirath misses his old friend who passed away just a few years ago.

There was also a keen demand for tractors in J&K, both in the Kashmir Valley and the plains of Jammu. So Tirath also secured the dealership of Escorts, who were the forerunners in the manufacture of tractors and other heavy machinery in India. Meanwhile, in a cautiously unfurling economy, Godrej had captured the imagination of all discerning customers with their steel furniture and whiteline goods like safes, almirahs and refrigerators. Their product lines, too, were added to Tirath's repertoire of brands.

Soon Tirath's companies were appointed sole distributors for sale, service and spares of all the leading companies manufacturing automobiles, farm machinery and office-cum-home equipment for the state of J&K. Says his dear friend Prem Soni who ran this business for Tirath. "He showed a lot of foresight and gradually diversified into many fields. After Premier and M&M, Bajaj for two and three wheelers, Godrej furniture, refrigerators, typewriters, security equipment, and not only tractors from Escorts but also Niki-Tasha gas stoves, televisions and washing machines. He had his own method for doing this. He would lay down broad plans for the conduct of business and leave the rest to the staff running the various concerns. He would trust them completely but would keep an eye on the organisation."

Prem Soni was a great pillar of support for Tirath. He had always been by Tirath's side during the construction of Broadway Cinema, Hotel Broadway and whenever Tirath needed a family member's support. His wife Vimla ties rakhi on Tirath and their daughters Renu, Anju and Geeta too are an integral part of Tirath's family. Tirath misses Prem and Vimla's company since they moved to Bangalore.

Tirath also feels lucky in having another sister, Mrs. Raj Kumari Kaul, who ties rakhi on Tirath, and has always given Tirath a sister's love and respect.

Adds Tirath, "I must remark here that nobody can accomplish anything in business without the support of one's family. In addition to my own three children and their respective spouses who have been a source of great strength and comfort to me and have helped me build my business, I can't forget the contribution of another son of mine - K. K. Mehra. K.K. is a brilliant Chartered Accountant with a flourishing practice, who like a family member, takes out inordinate time to oversee all the finances of the group. He is the one person that all my children and I completely confide in and are guided by. In fact the decisions that he makes for our financial benefit are much better than we possibly could overselves. Working tirelessly, guiding me most patiently (I can be quite persistent and stubborn) he lovingly looks after all my interests. His wife Romila, daughter of my friend Dilbagh Roy, has been Vijay's dearest friend from childhood. K.K. and Romi have given me a lot of love and affection.

I also had the good fortune to have as a friend the very learned Chartered Accountant and tax advisor. S.R. Dinodia. Decades ago he became a wise counsel and a very close friend. Today I can also call up his son Pradeep and get the same quality of advice and affection from him as I got from his father. Dinodia Sahib's sons Pradeep and Sandeep, their wives, his younger daughter Pratibha and her husband Shashi and especially his elder daughter Sadhna are equally part of my family. Whenever any of us needs help, the first person who comes to our mind is Sadhna. She's always there for us. In addition, I count Sadhna's husband Arun, as a God-gifted friend to me, despite the difference in our ages."

It must be mentioned here that Tirath was blessed not only by being born with an ability to win friends and advisors and to lead people and inspire their loyalty and admiration, but also with a keen sense of judgment in whom to select for which job. Tirath remembers his old team with great fondness, of whom most have

passed on by now: Pandit Zind Lal, B.L. Gadru, Sardar Daya Singh, K.L. Purdhani and so many others.

Of the last, he says, "After running the dealership in Srinagar, Purdhani Sahib handled my Jammu business. I also deputed him to Dehradun where I had started a dealership for Hindustan Motors with my friend Des Raj Kapur. Thereafter he became a great asset to my daughter Vijay and looked after all the finances of Hotel Broadway at Delhi till his demise. Purdhani Sahib was incredibly intelligent and his loyalty to me, and my company was beyond doubt. Even today, Vijay and Rohit miss his presence as they expand their business.

They however have another of my trusted aides, R. Srinivasan, who is one of the most resourceful, sincere and loyal people I have known. His learning curve of so many years in the automobile trade with me in Jammu has seamlessly transformed into perseverance in handling all kinds of assignments for Vijay at Hotel Broadway. Broadway has also gifted me the services of one man who single-handedly runs their office administration and personnel section and for years has spent his mornings with me - Ramesh Chandra Goswami. Today Ramesh patiently maintains all my files and papers, makes my schedule, writes my letters, makes calls on my behalf and has been a source of great comfort to me in the last few years. God bless him!"

Looking back, Tirath is taken aback at the enormous, highly profitable twist that came up in the tale of his dealerships. It was in the mid 80s that Maruti cars completely revolutionised the automobile industry in India. Amongst the first batch of about 10 to 12 to be appointed as their authorised dealers, was Tirath's company in J&K. To secure a Maruti dealership, though, has never been an easy affair. They are strict to a fault in screening prospective dealers from all angles to ensure the best possible combination of financial soundness, organizational ability, experience in the automobile trade, availability of suitable premises for showroom, workshop and many other criteria.

For the first year, Tirath handled the dealership for all of J&K until Maruti Udyog Limited (MUL) could make a final selection between two contending parties for the Kashmir dealership. Tirath, however, continued to run the dealership at Jammu with an option to establish an outlet at Srinagar also. He opened the MUL showroom at a prime site on B.C. Road in Jammu with a parking yard at Gangyal on the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway. At Srinagar, too, he completed all the infrastructure and after preliminary inspection, MUL approved all the arrangements for the establishment of an outlet there as well. However, the widespread violence that erupted in the Valley in the late 80s, disrupted all these efforts and Tirath had to wrap up his Kashmir project.

Says the then Maruti Managing Director, R.C. Bhargava about Tirath "He always had a very open mind and was willing to accept suggestions for change and improvements. He appreciated that Maruti was trying to change the way cars were sold and serviced, compared to the practices which had existed for many decades. This was no easy task, especially because during the first decade of Maruti there was a considerable gap between the demand and supply of Maruti cars. Dealers functioned in a near-monopoly situation. Nevertheless, it was to the credit of Lalaji that he fully cooperated in every way with our policies. The unfortunate developments in Kashmir caused considerable distress as well as financial loss to Lalaji. However, it never affected his positive attitude to life and his belief that in the end God would put everything right."

It was some time in the mid 90s that Tirath finally decided to call it a day and abdicated from all business operations as well as from active politics. All the dealerships were flourishing and doing commendable business but most had to suspend operations, as they were confined to the Valley alone, which was then in turmoil.

As Tirath takes stock today, he smiles and thinks that overall, he had a very good innings as a businessman and has every hope that his beloved state will realize its full economic potential some day soon.

Foray into Politics

It was about three years before Partition that elections were held by the LDK state legislature, then called the Panch Sabha, during the reign of the last maharaja, Hari Singh. After consulting a few friends, Tirth decided to stand as a candidate from Anantnag constituency. However, he was able to leave for Anantnag only at the penultimate date for filing nomination papers, accompanied by his brother Lata Hari Chand and me. We struggled through heavy rain and snow steadily, barely making it to the settlement of Anantnag by daylight and spent a cold, miserable night in a freezing room full of smokers, with hardly any food coming from the kitchen, the portable room heater typical of Kashmir. As soon as the day dawned, we rushed to the office of the Returning Officer to Anantnag, who also happened to be the local Minor Minister (Deputy Commissioner).

Part - III Kashmir Politics

The fact of the matter was as sorry as it was simple: "Brahm" jobs were printed in Urdu and by shuffling just a dot from the top to the bottom, the name Tirth was turned into Dirath. At that time, no one bothered in making any correction could do so since there was just the one dot and that was with the Returning Officer himself. Such slipshod work was a description of the manner during those for British officials in the dusty reign of the last maharaja. Nader, his elder brother, "Khyada" or "joda" his pet name, meaning, "By the shuffling of a single dot, 'Khyada' derived from 'God', but all our plans and preparations could go wrong against the Returning Officer and it was a very miserable time when school was closed early back in Srinagar for the week of election campaign. From there

Foray Into Politics

It was about three years before Partition that elections were held to the J&K state legislature, then called the Praja Sabha, during the reign of the last maharaja, Hari Singh. After consulting a few friends, Tirath decided to stand as a candidate from Anantnag constituency. However, he was able to leave for Anantnag only on the penultimate date for filing nomination papers, accompanied by his brother Lala Hari Chand and me. We struggled through heavy snow and poor visibility, barely making it to the settlement of Avantipura by nightfall and spent a cold, miserable night in a freezing room full of smoke, with hardly any heat emanating from the *bukhari*, the portable room heater typical of Kashmir. As soon as the day dawned, we rushed to the office of the Returning Officer in Anantnag, who also happened to be the local *Wazir Wazarat* (District Commissioner).

He took a cursory look at Tirath's nomination papers and stared long at him from head to foot, much to Tirath's embarrassment. He then looked at the voters' list and summarily rejected Tirath's papers on the grounds that he did not figure in it, since it was the name 'Birath Ram' that was listed against the relevant serial number. The fact that the parentage and residence indicated against that name tallied with Tirath's was, according to the officer, a non sequitur.

The fact of the matter was as sorry as it was sordid: voters' lists were printed in Urdu and by shifting just a dot from the top to the bottom, the name Tirath was turned into Birath. At that time, anyone interested in making such mischief could do so, since there was just the one list, and that too, with the Returning Officer himself. Such situations were aptly described in the popular saying about the hidden pitfalls in the dainty script of the Urdu language: *Nukta ke pher mein*, "*Khuda*" se "*juda*" ho gaya, meaning, 'By the shifting of a mere dot, "separation" ensued from "God"'. Not all our pleas and protestations could prevail against the Returning Officer and it was a very crestfallen threesome indeed that traipsed sadly back to Srinagar. In the event, the solitary candidate, Pandit Janki

Nath Bhatt, a Kashmiri Pandit like the Returning Officer, was declared elected unopposed from Anantnag. Bhat, a leading advocate, eventually became Chief Justice of the J&K High Court.

This was Tirath's first skirmish with electoral rigging, that later infected the state's political body like a lethal virus. But politics, too, was a virus and had bitten Tirath too deeply to leave his blood. One later anecdote in the state's political lore relates to the general election to the State assembly under Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. One Mr. Khaliq, District Magistrate, Anantnag, rejected nine nominations under one flimsy excuse or the other. It would be of interest to mention here that the first free and fair elections in J&K were held in 1977.

Despite that first misadventure and the shifting of life's tectonic plates with Partition, Nature reasserted herself and life resumed its normal course. Tirath, too, had no choice but to reconcile himself to the great human and material loss he had suffered. He resumed his business ventures and as they brought him increasing socio-economic success, he soon resumed his interest in state politics - which, meanwhile, had changed dramatically with the turbulent times.

The most important change for Kashmir, of course, was the evolution from being a semi-independent princely state to a state in a democracy, albeit with special status. It was not long before Tirath began to frequent Mujahid Manzil, the political cauldron in the heart of Srinagar, to interact with the political leadership of that critical period headed by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah and his close associates, Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beig, Maulana Masoodi (Tirath's teacher in school), Pandit Shyam Lal Saraf and D.P. Dhar. He soon established a close personal rapport with Beig, D.P. and Masoodi in particular and began to participate in all vital activities in his usual quiet, unassuming manner.

Of the three, Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beig was considered Sheikh Abdullah's right hand man. If the 'Lion of Kashmir' was the icon of the freedom movement

in Jammu & Kashmir, it was Beig who was lauded as the brain behind it. The Sheikh was known as the "Sher" (Lion) and Beig as the "Bulbul" (Nightingale). A man of immense conviction, Beig was the Sheikh's loyal companion for decades. Decades later, due to intense infighting for power within the Sheikh's own family, Beig was sidelined.

Tirath had been introduced to 'Beig Sahib' by the social reformer Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, in 1948. In the rough-and-tumble of politics, there came a day in August 1953, when Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, then Prime Minister of J&K and an opponent of Sheikh Abdullah, had Beig jailed, along with the Sheikh. Because of its special status, Kashmir had a "Prime Minister", an anomaly which could be linked to the misery of Kashmir confrontations. Our country had two Prime Ministers. No political pundit has been able to explain why, when Kashmir was an integral part of this country.

While Beig Sahib was in prison, Tirath received a frantic message from Mrs. Beig that she was desperately ill but because of her husband's political isolation, no doctor was willing to come by. Tirath immediately contacted his friend Dr. Ali Jan, the renowned Kashmiri physician, and persuaded him to come along to Anantnag to see Mrs. Beig.

At this juncture Tirath would like to say about his friend, Dr. Ali Jan, "Dr. Ali Jan became a legend in his lifetime and was revered as a messiah by all who came into contact with him. I was extremely lucky to meet him in early 40s soon after his return as a medical graduate. Our acquaintance soon ripened into very close friendship not only between the two of us but also between our families.

Every year we would take a few days off to relax and go out with close friends like Chikken Sahib and Habib Ullah Vadhera. We would either go fishing and enjoy the fresh catch fried in butter or sometimes go in a *donga* (boat) well equipped for *wazwan* towards Teibal and return after a few days.

Dr. Ali Jan ran an open house during Eid, where not only his friends and relatives would gather for partying but also many of his patients too. His second wife, Tajwar, was a wonderful hostess.

An incident will indicate how close we had come to each other. His first wife died of lung cancer on March 1, 1960 at the early age of 36. All through her illness she had been in terrible pain, which could not be relieved by any medicine. I vividly remember that when we were returning from the burial, Dr. Ali Jan and I exchanged vows that if, God forbid, either of us contacted such a painful disease, the other would take steps to put him to eternal sleep. It so happened that Dr. Ali Jan too contacted cancer of the pancreas and much against his wish was taken to USA for treatment, where he expired on October 31, 1988 at the age of 71.

At the time of his departure when Thakur Devi Das and I were taking him to the lounge in the wheelchair, he kept saying, "Chacha, I just cannot comprehend why I have been forced to undertake this arduous and futile trip. I am well aware as you people also are, that I shall not return alive." At this, I felt such pain that I could not stop my tears from rolling uncontrollably down my face. His body was flown back to Srinagar from the USA. When the plane landed, thousands of people were gathered at the airport to pay homage to the late doctor. In fact, the police had to intervene to control the mob. His body lies buried alongside that of his first wife at Magharmal Bagh in Srinagar.

Seeing Dr. Ali Jan's daughter Razia and her husband Khursheed who spend a lot of time with me when I am in Kashmir, makes me remember him even more. Dr. Ali Jan's other daughter Ameena and her husband Dr. Shafi are in the U.S. and doing very well as is his son Ahmed, also a doctor. I am proud that he is following in his illustrious father's footsteps."

In Mrs. Beig that August of 1953, Dr. Ali Jan found a patient whom he was able to prescribe to in the very nick of time before further delay proved fatal. This

incident did not escape the attention of the Bakshi government. Ironically, D.P. Dhar then was Home Minister and he reprimanded Tirath, already having had a run-in with him about helping his friend Abdul Hamid Khan escape to Pakistan. At that time, Agha Muzaffar, a close common friend and senior bureaucrat, was in a position to explain Tirath's secular and patriotic credentials to D.P. He narrated how Tirath would repeatedly quarrel with Agha Muzaffar's wife Aleema, a staunch supporter of Pakistan. Agha Muzaffar told D.P. firmly that Tirath's family had suffered tremendously during the 1947 raids and there was no question of his being a Pakistani sympathizer. It was just that Tirath could never betray a friend, whatever his religion or political inclination, which is why he had helped his close friend Hamid to go to Pakistan.

Tirath also explained the recent action himself, frankly and fearlessly. Nothing could be predicted with finality in politics, he told D.P., and today's rulers could find themselves in Beig Sahib's position tomorrow. Tirath boldly asked whether, were roles to be reversed and Mrs. Dhar sent to him for help, would he not be bound morally to assist her? D.P. then actually complimented Tirath for doing the right thing. The incident sealed their friendship and D.P.'s son, Vijay, eventually married Tirath's younger daughter, Kiran.

Tirath had always admired people who were well-read and could speak on various topics. He was naturally drawn to a man of deep intellect like D.P. Dhar and says in his tribute: "I have never come across a man with D.P.'s depth of knowledge. His desire to do something for Kashmir was helped by his brilliant political mind which could devise incredible strategies: He was a true Kashmiri patriot and my political mentor. If I were to recount various incidents from my memories about my great friend, that would be a book by itself. As our Ambassador to the Soviet Union in the early 70s, he was instrumental in bringing about the important twenty-year Indo-Soviet friendship treaty and the immense benefits that India gained through it. At his funeral people came out in thousands to have his darshan. D.P.'s genuine concern for the people of Kashmir was so great that today after 30 years of his passing away, he is still remembered with great respect."

Meanwhile, the politics of Kashmir needed careful negotiation. In 1947, after Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession and Kashmir stayed with India instead of "going" to Pakistan, an Emergency Administration was led by Sheikh Abdullah, who had started a mass movement in 1931 to improve the lot of rural Kashmiri Muslims and emerged as the undisputed leader of the Kashmiris. He had formed the political party, the Muslim Conference, in 1931, which developed schisms, but after the Sheikh grew close to the Indian National Congress, which led the freedom struggle against British rule on secular, non-communal lines, the Sheikh converted his party into the "National Conference" in June 1939 and drew support from Hindus and Sikhs for its secular ideology. Sheikh Abdullah was appointed the Head of the Emergency Administration on October 30, 1947. The Sheikh became Prime Minister of J&K on March 5, 1948. Ghulam Mohammed Bakshi, Mirza Afzal Beig, Shyam Lal Saraf, G. M. Sadiq and D.P. Dhar were part of his administration.

In 1950 Sheikh Abdullah went to the UN and praised India to the hilt. In July-August 1952, Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah worked out the "Delhi Agreement" that on the one hand, detailed the state's autonomy within the Indian Union and on the other, declared unequivocally that Kashmir was a part of India. The Sheikh announced this to a vast, upbeat gathering on July 26, 1952, at Srinagar's Lal Chowk. This agreement had lot of anomalies, though.

The Sheikh was suspected of being involved in a conspiracy against the Indian Union and was arrested on August 9, 1953 which was a black day in the history of J&K. He was replaced by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed as the new Prime Minister of the state.

But though Bakshi was an able administrator and valued as such by Nehru, who would not listen to complaints against him, unfortunately, the bane of most politicians – their family – tarnished Bakshi's term, too.

Not unnaturally, members of Bakshi's Cabinet like D.P. Dhar, Sadiq, Girdharilal Dogra and Syed Mir Qasim, began falling out with him. For three years this group kept at building up the corps of the Democratic National Conference (DNC) which today is the backbone of the Indian National Congress.

Recalling those turbulent times, the late Syed Mir Qasim (who later became Chief Minister) in his tribute to Tirath says, "In 1957, Sadiq Sahib, myself, Dogra Sahib, D.P. Dhar and Mir Lasjan refused to join the Cabinet because there were rumours about Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's corruption and high-handedness in dealing with the law and order situation. Even Pandit Nehru advised us not to form the splinter group of the Democratic National Conference (DNC). But Lala Tirath Ram appreciated our stand and supported us in all manner of ways. He looked after the workers of the DNC financially. He also helped Sadiq Sahib and me financially, as much as needed. Broadway Hotel at Delhi served as a free guesthouse for the leaders and workers of DNC. Moreover, he helped us quite a lot in our political work."

Says P.N. Jalali one of Kashmir's most respected senior journalists, "Lalaji's tendency to stand by those who fought injustice and stood against official high-handedness came into full play with the split in the ruling National Conference in 1957, when an influential section of its leadership led by the late Mr. G.M. Sadiq resigned and formed the Democratic National Conference. Supported by the late D.P. Dhar and Syed Mir Qasim the new party exposed corruption in high places and fought for democratic rights, which were under attack from the ruling faction headed by Bakshi Gulam Mohammed. Jawaharlal Nehru who decried the split publicly opposed the formation of the Democratic National Conference, describing the step as hundred percent wrong. Faced with Panditji's censorship, several influential persons who had proposed to support the new party backed away. But not so Lalaji, who boldly and publicly came to the rescue of DNC leaders by liberally financing the activities of the party and the leaders."

However, the DNC realised that there was no way of overthrowing Bakshi and Bakshi too was secure in this knowledge. But as increasing reports of his family's malpractices began to assault the Centre's ears, the government came up with the ruse called the "Kamaraj Plan", devised by the eponymous politician from Tamil Nadu, in which senior political chieftains were asked to leave their high office and "mentor" the junior cadres. It was conceived basically to oust the two Chief Ministers who had gotten too big for their boots, Pratap Singh Kairon of Punjab and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. But while the former was too wily to hand in his resignation (he was later assassinated by political enemies), Bakshi fell into the trap and submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister, installing a puppet government under his nominee, Shams-ud-din, on October 11, 1963.

In the very first few months of this regime, on the night of December 26, 1963, the Holy Relic (Hair of the Prophet) was stolen from its place of veneration at Hazrat Bal mosque in Srinagar and Kashmir plunged into turmoil.

As Syed Mir Qasim writes in his autobiography of 1992, "The possession of the Holy Relic, or *Moe-e-Muqaddas*, gives the Kashmiris a deep spiritual satisfaction. As the story goes, the Relic, which is a strand of the holy hair of the Prophet, was brought to Bijapur in India by one Syed Abdullah from Medina in 1635. He said he was a direct descendant of the Prophet. When Syed Abdullah died, his son, Syed Hamid, inherited the Relic. Later, he passed it on to a Kashmiri businessman, Nooruddin. Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor, deprived Nooruddin of the Relic and sent it to Dargah Saheb at Ajmer. Nooruddin was rewarded with a lifelong jail term in Lahore for possessing the Relic. Later, realising his mistake, Aurangzeb allowed the relic to go to Kashmir, but Nooruddin had already died in prison, a heartbroken man. The Holy Relic reached Shopian in Kashmir along with the exhumed body of Nooruddin in AD 1700. It was kept in the place now known as the Hazrat Bal shrine. The descendants of Nooruddin, now known as 'Nishan Deh', alone had the right to exhibit the Relic on special occasions."

Given this importance in the hearts of the Kashmiris, the disappearance of the Holy Relic became a crisis of constitutional proportions, graver than even law and order. Bakshi Sahib was on the run and Shams-ud-din had to abandon his post. Sadiq, D.P. Dhar and Syed Mir Qasim, together with Trilochan Dutt, took over. In support, the Government of India sent handpicked civil servants with a track record of capability: P.K. Dave, Sushital Banerjee and P.K. Kaul. They took charge of the state administration and along with the politicians, restored order in this particularly bad phase in Kashmir politics. The Holy Relic was found back in place at 5.30 pm, on January 4 and to silence Pakistan's politically-motivated clamour about its authenticity, a committee of highly respected men verified it.

Banerjee and Dave developed a relationship of deep mutual respect with Tirath. Though Banerjee passed away tragically young, Dave's friendship endures till today. Tirath says in his tribute to Dave "When the founders of our great nation dreamt of ideal governance, they probably thought that only men like P.K. Dave would run a bureaucracy which could take India to its rightful position in the world. Alas, people of Dave Saab's admirable abilities and total honesty are a rarity. I am privileged to have a man of his goodness as a friend." Eventually, Dave was made the Chief Secretary of Jammu & Kashmir while Sadiq became the Prime Minister and later its first Chief Minister. This was the first time that the state's integration with the rest of the country was being considered more seriously. It is interesting to note that people from the rest of India still needed a permit to visit J&K, though it was a part of India.

Tirath was later to forge another bond of friendship with a future Chief Secretary, R.K. Takkar, whom he is most fond of. Another bureaucrat of great eminence and integrity was Khwaja Abdul Rashid. Even after his retirement as Secretary, Works and Power, Tirath continued a great friendship with him which carries on today through his son Akhtar and daughter Zia who treat Tirath with filial respect.

Sadiq as Chief Minister, Mir Qasim and D.P. realised that it was not necessary to keep the Sheikh in jail any more. They persuaded the Centre and Sheikh Abdullah was released on April 8 that year, with the conspiracy cases against him dropped. Talks took place between him and Jawahar Lal Nehru and he was sent to Pakistan for talks with Field Marshal Ayub Khan on May 25. Unfortunately while he was there, Pandit Nehru passed away on May 27. Protests and demonstrations started taking place in Kashmir from December against Article 357 of the Indian Constitution on Kashmir's autonomy and in 1965 Pakistan initiated yet another war with India (a fact admitted to only 40 years later in September 2005 by Pakistan), which lasted until the middle of September that year. Sadiq, meanwhile, continued to prove a capable Chief Minister and the golden team of D.P., G.L. Dogra and Mir Qasim lent him able support.

Tirath would like to say a few things about his dear friend Girdhari Lal Dogra: "Dogra Sahib was a tremendous human being and became like a member of my family. He was perhaps the longest-serving Finance Minister of any state in the country. I remember when I visited his constituency Hira Nagar, I found every house had his photograph, so immense was the love of the people for him."

The current Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, says in his tribute to Tirath, "Lala Tirath Ram is a quintessential part of the mystique of Kashmir. He is part of its political fables as much as he contributed to its social life, but I have marked Lalaji always for his boldness and courage. My earliest impression of Lala Tirath Ram is of 1959, the days when I entered politics during the heyday of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. For me, fresh from Aligarh as a trained young lawyer and a master's degree in Arabic under the belt, the decision to join politics seemed strange, for good government jobs were relatively easy to come. With my family background that would in any case have been more welcome at home. However, joining politics and that too through an opposition outfit was considered insane. I preferred to join the Democratic National Conference (DNC) rather than Bakshi's ruling National Conference that overwhelmed every sphere of the state's political and social life at that time.

In the DNC I found a rich repertoire of political timbre, intellectual authenticity and a yearning for change. The laid back, rather lazy but enlightened aristocracy of G.M. Sadiq, D.P. Dhar's political mastermind and Syed Mir Qasim's decency added up to a great combination for any political scenario but in the Kashmir of those times it was something akin to today's suicide strategy. And one man who provided the steel for the strength of this combination against the formidable resources of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, his government and undisputed levers of domination was Lala Tirath Ram. He displayed a no-holds-barred approach towards the government and the fighting abilities of the DNC, for whatever duration, received unstinted support from Lalaji. He stuck his neck out in situations where it was clearly hazardous to do so.

Lala Tirath Ram was a pillar of support for another revolt many years later, this time against Mr. G.M. Sadiq. He would again be the antithesis of the conventional political wisdom of *saaf chhupte bhi nahin, samne aatey bhi nahin*. He openly sided with the group that wanted a change in the state leadership and having a business presence in Delhi, he provided the necessary logistical support to the rebels. For whatever reasons, the move failed but Lalaji never regretted his association with a losing side even though he had obviously wide business interests in the state, a consideration that generally would make someone else in his place more circumspect."

In 1967, D.P. Dhar was appointed as India's Ambassador to the Soviet Union. At that time, a vacancy occurred in the Rajya Sabha or Upper House of Parliament. Keen that Tirath should occupy it and sound a sane voice in Parliament, D.P. lobbied with Congress leaders Indira Gandhi and P.N. Haksar, and L.P. Singh, the then Home Secretary, to endorse Tirath's candidacy. And Tirath was indeed nominated for this prestigious post, a role he was to fulfill for twenty years and eleven months.

Parliament : The Indira Gandhi Years

In 1967, soon after Tirath was first sworn in to the Rajya Sabha, he unintentionally “made a scene” that was unprecedented in the annals of Indian Parliament. During question hour one day, an MP sitting in front of Tirath got up and rushed to the well of the House, gesticulating wildly and shouting at the top of his voice. Tirath, in his innocence, thought that the member was going to assault the Hon’ble Chairman. The gallant Kashmiri and veteran of many wrestling bouts was not one to stand by. He lunged after the MP, caught him by the waist and threw him down on the floor. There was pandemonium, with everyone on their feet, shouting in vociferous protest against the way the new MP had defiled the sanctity of the House. Only two members seemed to have been stunned into silence – Tirath and his victim, who just stared at him with unbelieving eyes, mumbling incoherently.

D.P. Dhar, who was fortuitously present at that particular Rajya Sabha session, rushed to where Tirath had pinned down the unfortunate MP and dragged him back to his seat. He apologised to the House on Tirath’s behalf, explaining that the new MP had merely misunderstood matters. Indira Gandhi, as Prime Minister, also happened to be present in the House when this amusing incident occurred.

Tirath was summoned the very next day to Mrs. Gandhi’s chambers to explain himself. He found her reaction gentle and understanding. She seemed to like his honest and sincere demeanour and told him to call upon her whenever he wished to talk to her about the various problems concerning his state. This was the beginning of a very special bond between the two which kept getting stronger over the years. Perhaps a contributory factor in her continued faith in Tirath was that he must have been amongst the very few MPs who never sought any personal favours from her.

Term after term, it was Indira Gandhi herself who saw to it that Tirath remained a Member of the Rajya Sabha, a tenure that lasted for almost 21 years – a record in itself (his last term as MP was during Rajiv Gandhi’s term as Prime Minister).

Says Justice Tirath Singh Thakur, “A great judge of men, Mrs. Gandhi was impressed by Lalaji’s low profile, presence and abiding loyalty to her. Lalaji had

earned the rare privilege of going to Mrs. Gandhi at any time with any problem relating to his state. He may not have wielded ministerial authority at any time, but that did not make him in any way less effective in touching the lives of those whom he represented in the Parliament. His proximity to Mrs. Gandhi was a fact well known in the political circles, which gave him the advantage of influencing decisions whenever and wherever he wished to do so. Mrs. Gandhi in particular had great faith in Lalaji's opinion on any matter relating to Kashmir affairs. She believed that Lalaji's opinion on any specific issue was honest, fair and realistic having regard to the ground realities. It was not therefore surprising to see Lalaji continue as a Member of Parliament for over 20 years, a feat rarely possible for a person belonging to a small state like Jammu & Kashmir."

Indeed, Tirath was one of the very few who really could and did talk to Mrs. Gandhi fearlessly about everything. Around the early 80s, there was a well-planned and concerted move by Swraj Paul and Goenka to take over Premier Automobiles Ltd and Escorts Ltd, two companies doing very well as manufacturers, respectively, of vehicles and farm machinery. Both the companies were family-managed and their founders, the late Seth Lalchand and the late Hari Nanda, had built them up practically from scratch. Since Tirath was one of their dealers and close to the corridors of power in the Centre, he learned about this intention. Moreover, he had become virtually part of the family with the Lalchands and admired Seth Lalchand greatly as a man of immense vision who had pioneered many industries in India. He also knew Hari Nanda from Jammu. Hari had been 'escorted' by his brother by train to Delhi to establish the business. The name 'Escorts' was thereby coined and proved singularly fortunate for a very successful company pioneering agricultural machinery, for which Hari had toiled so hard.

Tirath, no stranger himself to nurturing entrepreneurial projects, felt most strongly about the impending takeovers. Accordingly, he placed the relevant facts before Mrs. Gandhi who, despite strong lobbying and opposition, agreed with Tirath's reasoning that it would be wrong to permit the takeover of these path-breaking companies by outsiders.

The much-hyped attempts by Goenka and Paul in this regard thus ended in a whimper. It may be of interest to reproduce here the letter written to Tirath later by Vinod Doshi of Premier Automobiles Ltd.

Bombay

December 30, 1981

My dear Chachaji,

The Annual General Meeting of PAL Ltd. took place yesterday afternoon and I am happy to say that everything went off very well. Both Dada and I were re-elected to the Board without any hitch. I am writing this especially to express, on behalf of myself and my entire family, our deepest and most sincere gratitude for your personal interest and support in this matter. We honestly believe, Chachaji, that had you not effectively intervened, God only knows what might have happened. Thank you, with all my heart. We hope that your special love for our family will not only continue but flourish with years to come.

With this we send you and your marvelous family our most hearty and sincere good wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year.

May it bring you all cheer and good tidings, always.

With warmest personal regards,

Yours gratefully,

Vinod

Tirath has many fond memories of Indira Gandhi – her wit, her grace, and her indomitable spirit. Playing host to her several times when she visited J&K, Tirath discovered that Mrs. Gandhi was partial to Kashmiri-style *tsaman* (fried squares of paneer in gently-spiced tomato gravy). In later years she revealed to Tirath that eating it made her think of her dead son, Sanjay, for he too had been very fond of it. Though she was not one to ever feel the need to explain any actions of hers to anyone, Tirath remembers many a time that she did do so to him.

He recalls an incident when he was waiting in the line up of MPs and VIPs, all with bouquets of cheerful marigolds, to bid safe farewell to her at the airport. She imperiously swept past all, merely nodding, without taking notice or accepting any of the bouquets. But when she passed him by, she immediately retraced her steps and told Tirath in her charming way, "Please do not mind, I am allergic to marigolds," not wishing to hurt his feelings.

In Parliament, Tirath made many a friend. It was quite rare at that time for a Congressman who was considered so close to Mrs. Gandhi, to also be friendly with those opposed to her and the Congress. Be it Lal Krishan Advani, Kedar Nath Sahni or Atal Bihari Vajpayee, there was healthy respect and camaraderie between them and Tirath despite opposing party philosophies.

Mr. Vajpayee, of course, had occasion to head many Committees of Parliament including the Public Accounts Committee and to lead or be a member of Indian official delegations abroad. Tirath was on some of these committees with Vajpayee and the numerous foreign and domestic tours brought them close to each other.

Says Tirath, "I had the privilege of being Atalji's contemporary in Parliament for around 20 years. In this period and afterwards, Atalji strode the political scene as an exceptional leader – a nationalist whose oratory in chaste Hindi fascinated me as it did the Parliament and the people of the nation. Of far greater importance than his oratorical eloquence, was always Atalji's complete commitment to the integrity and security of India and her Constitution.

Though a die-hard Congressman and an Indira loyalist, I cannot but express great admiration for the manner in which Atalji led the country to a position of strength within and of influence outside, among the foremost countries of the world. His achievements will be written in golden letters in Indian history."

Back in Kashmir, matters took a new turn with the death of G.M. Sadiq in December 1971. Syed Mir Qasim became Chief Minister. A good and pragmatic person it was evident to him and all that the popular support that the Sheikh (now out of prison) still enjoyed would sooner or later manifest itself into political centre stage for him.

The Kashmir Accord And Thereafter

Vijay Dhar, D.P.'s son and Tirath's son-in-law, points out that the early 70s were a critical time in which the War for Bangladesh had been fought and won against Pakistan by India and that not only was the history of the sub-continent changed but also its political geography.

After D.P. Dhar's return from Moscow in 1972, when D.P. was to be made Union Minister of Planning, Tirath was to resign his Rajya Sabha seat in D.P.'s favour. However, Indira Gandhi wanted Tirath to continue since she had come to rely on him on all matters relating to J&K. So D.P. was given another seat that had fallen vacant and both he and Tirath were able to do the spadework for the crucial "Kashmir Accord" also known as the "Beig-Parthasarathy Accord", resulting from talks between Mohammed Afzal Beig, as Sheikh Abdullah's pointsman and bureaucrat G. Parthasarathy as Mrs. Gandhi's.

Tirath resolved that he should play a role in eradicating the differences between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah. He first went to Mrs. Gandhi and explained the ground realities to her and implored her to consider the Sheikh's return to power. He told her that this was the popular feeling in the Valley. She came around to his way of thinking and gave him full powers to begin negotiations with Sheikh Abdullah - a task that was evidently not going to be easy.

The Sheikh's two most trusted advisors, Mirza Afzal Beig and Ghulam Mohammad Chikken, were both extremely good friends of Tirath, who had stayed in touch with them even when they were in prison. Without making a big thing of it, in his characteristic fashion, he had tried his best to take care of whatever needs their families had had at that time. Therefore, the goodwill he enjoyed in the Sheikh's camp was immense.

Mirza Afzal Beig was thought by many to be the person closest to Sheikh Abdullah. Tirath spoke at length to him about his meeting with Mrs. Gandhi and told him that he (Beig) would have to play an important role in mending fences if he wished to

have the Sheikh back in power. Beig promptly arranged for Tirath to meet the Lion of Kashmir.

It was with great trepidation that Tirath walked into the bruised Lion's den, for the Sheikh was still smarting from his long ordeal in prison. Fortunately, a strategic opening line came to Tirath just as he was about to enter the Sheikh's room. He began by telling the Sheikh about his meeting with Indira Gandhi and how she bore no grudge against the Sheikh. In fact, she felt nostalgically close to him, since he had been a contemporary of her father. The Sheikh was visibly taken aback by this statement and seeing his reaction, Tirath proceeded to say that Mrs. Gandhi had specifically told him that in the absence of Pandit Nehru, she actually looked upon the Sheikh as a father figure. She regarded him as a great statesman who would obviously do what was best for Kashmir and also be the long-awaited advisor at the national level that she had been so bereft of. Perhaps it was Tirath's sincerity or the way he spoke from the heart but in that first meeting itself, he felt no doubt that the Sheikh would let bygones be bygones and that a fresh chapter was about to start in Kashmir affairs.

Tirath's intervention and shuttling diplomacy between the two camps led finally to the initiation of talks in 1972 between the two sides, represented by Mirza Afzal Beig on the one hand and G. Parthasarathy on behalf of Mrs. Gandhi.

Having successfully thawed the ice between Mrs. Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah, Tirath became their regular go-between thereafter and would carry the Sheikh's messages to Indira Gandhi and vice-versa without their having met formally yet. The Sheikh was then camping in Delhi, at 3 Kotla Lane, along with Beig. It was agreed that too much capital would be made by the press if he were to meet Mrs. Gandhi without having the terms of the accord finally settled (Tirath was to remember this wise avoidance of counter-productive media attention when the infamous Agra Summit in 2002 between General Parvez Musharraf and Atal Behari Vajpayee was scuttled by too many journalists, too closely in public debate with the protagonists). While Parthasarathy and Beig met officially, Tirath would meet the Sheikh and Indira Gandhi in camera. Due to his friendship with Beig, he was, additionally, able to convince Beig to push on certain aspects of the accord.

Driven by his need to play a constructive role in the chance given to him by history, Tirath would alternatively massage both the king-sized egos involved by making up wonderful phrases that each had ostensibly showered on the other, creating a feeling of immense mutual goodwill. He would tell Sheikh Sahib how emotional Indiraji used to get when discussing him and tell Mrs. Gandhi how the Sheikh felt so paternal about her because of his high regard for Pandit Nehru and how extremely impressed he was with the adroit way in which she was handling the formidable responsibility of governing India.

Tirath was in the unique position of enjoying Mrs. Gandhi's confidence for several reasons. He was content to remain a backroom player, with no personal axe to grind. He never pressured her to grant personal favours. Nor did she have the slightest reason to doubt that Tirath's loyalty lay completely with her, the Congress and the overall national interests rather than with the Sheikh's personal aspirations. At the same time she knew that Tirath was fearless in speaking up if anything ever went against the interests of Kashmir and the people of Kashmir. At that time how many people around her could actually disagree with her? She would discuss every detail of the proposed accord with him and examine strategies on everything put forward by Beig.

Likewise, Mirza Afzal Beig had complete confidence in Tirath and would share with him the details of his talks with Parthasarthy. The Sheikh, too, seemed to count on Tirath, amazed at the speed with which Mrs. Gandhi's personal views on various clauses would be conveyed to him daily. When the actual negotiations on the accord began, Beig, at the end of each day, would give Tirath the Sheikh's views which would be promptly conveyed to Mrs. Gandhi. Tirath remembers there was one very important issue wherein Beig was adamant about not budging from his stand. But the Sheikh told him that he did not want the talks to fail at any cost and if need be, he would give in on that clause. Tirath conveyed this to Mrs. Gandhi, thereby equipping her to stick to her guns.

However, fate had another decision in store. Mir Qasim, by that time realizing the growing importance of the Sheikh, decided to make a smooth transition of Power to Sheikh Abdullah. Mrs. Gandhi told Tirath that she would give up on this issue

since "Qasim is in an indecent hurry to resign". Knowing that she would have absolutely no leverage left, she decided to expedite the matter and reach an accord before Qasim let his decision be known to the public and thereby to the Sheikh. There would be no reason left for the Sheikh to agree to even the agreed issues, if he knew he was going to be in power in any case.

The Kashmir Accord was duly finalized on November 13, 1974. Kashmir was fully re-committed to India as an integral part of the country, enjoying certain privileges. After the Accord had been signed, Tirath accompanied the Sheikh to meet Mrs. Gandhi. Their meeting was very cordial but on coming out, the first person the Sheikh called upon was Mrs. Gandhi's strongest political foe, the Gandhian intellectual and mind-manager of the Opposition, Jaipakash Narayan or 'JP' - much to Mrs. Gandhi's chagrin.

On his way home to Kashmir, the Sheikh stayed at Tirath's house at Manda in Jammu, ignoring the invitations of Mir Qasim and other political bigwigs. At Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah was expectedly accorded a tumultuous welcome. Syed Mir Qasim resigned from his Chief Ministership of Kashmir on February 24, 1975 and Sheikh Abdullah took over the reins of government amidst great fanfare the next day.

The Sheikh and Beig wound up their Plebiscite Front (PF) and reverted to the National Conference after a last meeting of the PF's executive committee in July 1975 at Mujahid Manzil.

Of these momentous events, Tirath says, "In a humble way, I feel I did play my small part in bringing about the Indira-Sheikh accord on Kashmir, the tenets of which were to lay down the ground rules for governance in Kashmir for the next few decades." Says PN Jalali, about Tirath's mediatory role in clinching the deal between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah resulting in the Kashmir Accord of 1975, "While, the nation's attention was focused on Beig-Parthasarathy discussions, Lalaji, away from the gaze of media, was shuttling between Mrs. Gandhi's residence and the Sheikh, lodged at Kotla Lane in Delhi, keeping the two in constant touch with each other, to ensure their interlocutors did not leave their task half finished without a success.

While Beig and Parthasarathy were exchanging ideas, Lalalji was carrying the Sheikh's reactions to Indiraji and vice-versa. This went on till the discussions reached a culminating point in an agreement between the two sides."

Meanwhile, the Sheikh's first and biggest challenge was to form a state government that would inspire confidence in all sections of the people, giving due representation to all three regions of the state: the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh. But he wished to keep at bay those persons who had adopted politics as a profession and so made up his mind to request D.D. Thakur from Jammu and Sonam Narboo from Ladakh to join his new ministry. However, to persuade them to accede to his wishes was not an easy task. D.D. Thakur was then serving as a judge of the High Court and clearly had a brilliant future ahead in his chosen profession. Narboo had had a very successful innings as an engineer and was now retired to a well-earned life of rest. Affirming the great faith that he now placed in Tirath, the Sheikh entrusted him with the delicate and vital task of persuading both these good men to join his government.

Tirath's close friendship with Sonam Narboo since college days was known to all and as a family member it did not take Tirath much effort to persuade Narboo to agree to join the Sheikh's ministry. Narboo was literally worshipped in Ladakh and now was his chance to do more for his people.

But Tirath had never met D.D. Thakur previously and had no personal contact with him. However, he met him at the latter's place at Jammu and conveyed to him Sheikh Sahib's offer. Thakur's initial response was not encouraging but Tirath got him to talk to Sheikh Sahib on the telephone, as a result of which Thakur also agreed to join the Sheikh's ministry.

As D.D. Thakur tells it in his autobiography (*My Life and Years in Kashmir Politics*), Tirath introduced himself at a wedding they both attended and asked if he could call next day. Thakur agreed, on the condition that no judicial matters would be broached. Despite his wife's objections, he eventually capitulated to the Sheikh's demand.

Tirath was not to know at that time that this was going to be the beginning of one of his most enduring and cherished friendships. As eventual Deputy Chief Minister in Sheikh Abdullah's cabinet, D.D. Thakur proved to be one of the greatest administrators the state has known and adopted progressive measures to rid the system of corruption and arbitrariness. He later became Governor of Assam, too. Thakur Sahib over the years has become a very close friend, a sincere well-wisher and a wise advisor to Tirath. With most of his friends no more, it is Thakur Sahib's company today which rejuvenates Tirath. His son, Justice Tirath Singh Thakur, has inherited not only his father's wisdom and intellect but also his sense of humour. Since the last so many years, despite the vast differences in their ages, the two Tiraths have been regaling each other with jokes, even risqué ones.

Years later, D.D. Thakur gave up active politics and joined the Bar, but in Delhi, rather than in J&K and has been amongst India's topmost lawyers for years now. He describes Tirath as: "...a widely-respected businessman, soft and sympathetic to all and sundry, kind to everyone including his employees and friends. His kindness had made him wealthy and his wealth had made him kind. Bespectacled and impeccably dressed, he had created an impact on my life during the eight years of my association with him. He had never solicited any favour from me...he had built a big empire in the state - hotels, lands, franchises, orchards and what-not, and yet, ego and arrogance was not a part of his character. One of the admirable traits of Mr Amla's character was that he looked after the leaders while they were out of office, more than when those who were in office. He had maintained a close association with Sheikh Abdullah and was a frequent visitor to his residence. I believe the initial idea of an accord between the Sheikh and Indiraji had been planted by Mr Amla, presumably because of his proximity to both."

On March 27, 1977, the Congress party withdrew support from Sheikh Abdullah. He resigned as Chief Minister. The Congress, then led by Mufti Mohammed Syed and supported by the Governor, L.K. Jha, decided to form the government. Tirath was the treasurer of the party, then at a very difficult time in the political history of J&K. The three pillars of the party at that time were Mufti Mohammed Syed, Ghulam Rasool Kar and Mangat Ram Sharma. The first two strengthened the Congress Party in the valley and Mangat Ram took over the mantle from

Girdhari Lal Dogra, the doyen of Jammu, and continued the good work started by Dogra Sahib in Jammu. All three had two things in common: One - they rose from the ranks of the party and were grassroot workers. The second - all of them were very fond of Tirath and he of them.

Another young leader who was being recognized at the All India level at that time was Ghulam Nabi Azad. He was the first Kashmiri leader who fought and won an election from outside the state - Maharashtra. The second leader who fought and won (from Bihar) was Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. Ever since Azad's foray into national politics, he has been close to Tirath and has valued his advice.

The then Prime Minister, Morarjee Desai, decided to go in for Governor's Rule and the first free and fair elections to the State Assembly were held on June 7, 1977. The National Conference got 47 out of 76 seats and Sheikh Abdullah formed the government and ruled till September 8, 1982, when he passed away.

By then, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had again led the Congress to victory and was the Prime Minister of India. She favoured Farooq to succeed Sheikh. The following year in June 1983 in the elections held in J&K, Farooq led the National Conference to a convincing victory. He was keen on playing the Sheikh's role in Kashmir, but like many a son before him, he found the father's shoes too big to fill.

Within a few months his relationship with the Centre started souring. Farooq called a conclave of the opposition leaders in Srinagar and the object of the conclave was a unanimous anti-Indira Gandhi agenda. This upset and annoyed Mrs. Gandhi and it was decided to remove Farooq.

Tirath however told her that it might not be a good idea and that for all his faults, Farooq was a nationalist. Moreover, there was no alternative. But Mrs. Gandhi had made up her mind. She said, "Yes, there is. Gul Shah". Tirath was stunned and expressed his opposition to this choice to which she responded to with "I have made up my mind. Please go and speak to him."

B.K. Nehru, too, did not think this was a good move but knew that once his niece's mind was made up, no one on earth could change it. Rather than be part

of the machinations that would be required to remove Farooq and install Gul Shah (Farooq's brother-in-law) he chose to be shifted to Gujarat as Governor. It was Arun Nehru who selected and got Jagmohan's name approved as Governor of Kashmir. And it was Tirath who was put in charge by Mrs. Gandhi to strategise over the jockeying for power in the Sheikh's family between son-in-law Gul Shah and son Farooq. Gul Shah needed a minimum of thirteen members of Farooq's legislature to form his own government in early 1984. And, in the now-familiar pattern of Indian politics, the required number of legislators switched sides.

However, Gul Shah lacked commitment and stature. In the international political arena, India was getting a bad name for imposing Chief Ministers on Kashmir. In short, Gul Shah did not serve the purpose, although by now Tirath had grudgingly begun to appreciate some of his administrative qualities. However, Gul Shah had to go and Governor's Rule under Jagmohan was imposed. Farooq kept his flock of MLAs together. Not one left him despite all efforts.

Jagmohan was an excellent administrator but lacked the intricacies of politics. He improved the roads, helped tone the administration and made them answerable. As Tirath had predicted, Jagmohan's work was generally hailed, including the terrific road and systems that he put in place at Tirath's beloved Mata Vaishno Devi shrine.

While Gul Shah's reign was carrying on, Farooq was trying to find a path out of the political wilderness and by 1986 had forged a friendship with Rajiv Gandhi again. Rajiv in the meantime was convinced that in all the troubled states, accords should be signed with credible opposing leaders. First was the Rajiv-Longowal Accord and then came the famous Rajiv-Farooq Accord and Farooq was again installed as the Chief Minister. However, this marriage cost the Congress and National Conference their base in the Valley since now there was no opposition to speak of. This was one of the reasons later for Mufti Mohammed Sayeed to resign from the Congress and build a new, parallel pro-Kashmiri party affiliated to India, the People's Democratic Front.

The Muslim United Front, too, decided to put forth its candidates to oppose the National Conference-Congress alliance. Although Farooq won the elections, there was an uproar in the Valley over the alleged rigging and to some extent, observers of Kashmir politics call this particular election a watershed since almost everybody in the Valley felt let down and started looking at alternatives who could become their voice. The Muslim United Front was one. Their slogan went "MUF is tuff".

Kashmiris were particularly angry when winning candidates lost. This was the turning point in Kashmir's history. This was the rise of fundamentalism in the state. It could be argued that MUF was a party backed by the mullahs and Pakistan but then allowing them to win 10 seats in the assembly would not have changed the Constitution. It would definitely have given some pride to those Kashmiris who believed in this party. That's what democracy is about. One should however give Farooq Abdullah the credit of being consistent in his slogan "Kashmir was, is and will always remain a part of India."

However, all that is history. Now Tirath Ram Amla's businesses became a target, his hotel was subjected to rocket attacks and was almost taken over. Broadway Cinema was burnt down. Like so many others, his family too, was uprooted from their home.

Tirath's role in power politics changed dramatically and forever on October 31, 1984, when Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. I recall that Tirath and I were in Bombay the day Indiraji was assassinated. We were shell-shocked and rushed back to Delhi the same night. It was a nightmare trying to reach Tirath's house in Sunder Nagar as riots had broken out all over Delhi and to our horror, hapless Sikhs were being hounded and massacred mercilessly, their properties shockingly reduced to rubble all over the city. We saw mobs of miscreants on the rampage everywhere on our way from the airport to Sunder Nagar. As a matter of fact, we had been warned at the airport itself not to take the risk of going into town at such a late hour, but somehow we managed to reach our destination.

Next morning, when Tirath went to pay his respects to where Indira Gandhi's mortal remains lay in state before the funeral, he suddenly remembered that his friend Sardar Inderjit Singh, the former Chairman, Punjab & Sindh Bank, lived across the road from his daughter Vijay Lakshmi's house in Maharani Bagh. Rushing there, he dragged the reluctant family pell-mell across the road to his daughter's house, itself a risky manoeuvre, since Sikhs taking refuge in others' houses too were being targeted.

But he was profoundly thankful for having insisted, for soon after, to the great shame of the neighbourhood, the Singh house too was attacked and vandalized. The ugliness of that time is a devastating memory that rekindled the horrors of Partition to people of our generation.

Moreover, Indira Gandhi's brutal death left us dumbfounded. To Tirath, as to many others, it was a cataclysmic tragedy. With her passing, ended a most eventful era in the history of modern India. Life would never be the same again, especially in Kashmir. Today a lot is being written and said about Indira Gandhi. Tirath has always maintained that "she was the only nationalist leader acceptable in every nook and corner of the country. Indiraji was the architect of today's India. All those who later took credit, forget that the foundation of today's strong India was laid by Indira Gandhi."

After the death of Indira Gandhi Tirath stopped playing much of an active role in politics. Having been part of the inner circle of Kashmir politics with all the titans, he could not really come to terms with the type of politics that took place later. In fact, handing over the reigns of the automobile business (which was the one business he used to personally look after) to me, he retired from both the loves of his life, politics and business, and finally accepted that in his 70s he should take it slightly easier. However fate was to decide otherwise. Rajiv Gandhi too realised that he needed somebody whom he could really count on in the Valley and in 1985 re-nominated Tirath for his fourth stint, making him probably one of the longest-serving members of Parliament in the history of the country.

The Valley Burns

The year 1988-89 is crucial in the history of post-Independence India. It was this year that militancy in its new avatar raised its ugly head in Jammu and Kashmir for the first time. Protests in the Valley had begun with anti-Indian demonstrations and our neighbours too had managed to take full advantage of the situation.

Disgruntled elements had existed right from the time the state acceded to India but for the most part, they remained dormant. Whenever, on rare occasions, they tried to demonstrate their pro-Pak affiliations in public, they were forthwith forced to retreat not only by the government of the time but also by political parties like the Congress and the National Conference which were the two dominant mainstream parties active in J&K.

In the year 1988-89, however, not only was the complexion of militancy quite different, but also the response of the government and the political parties. For the first time, the cross-border infiltration of terrorists assumed alarming proportions and actually received a positive response from a sizeable chunk of local youth who had been indoctrinated, armed, financed and trained by Pakistan. What was worse was the inexplicably spineless and negligent response of the authorities, at both the state and the Centre, who vigorously played down the gravity of the snowballing insurgency and appeared to be in grave denial.

On April 27, 1989, Atal Bihari Vajpayee raised a question in the Rajya Sabha regarding the upsurge in militancy due to cross-border infiltration in the state. P. Chidambaram, then Minister of State in the Home ministry, stated in his reply to Vajpayee's question that the situation was well under control, that the Government, in consultation with the state, was going to take very strong action and that there had been a marked improvement in the situation during the last 10 to 12 days.

He was very optimistic and certain that positive results would become evident in the next two to three weeks as a result of the strong action being taken by the two governments against the insurgents. He did admit that 75 infiltrators from across the border had been arrested and stated "with full responsibility and seriousness", as he put it, that no more cross-border infiltration would take place.

Tirath could bear it no longer. He got up to ask a supplementary question during which he made a statement strongly disputing the claim made by Chidambaram. He refuted that the improvement in the situation in the Valley in the last 10 to 12 days was due to any strong action taken by the Government. Tirath pointed out that if there had been an abatement in the militancy-connected incidents at all, it was not because of any so-called "strong actions" taken by the authorities but was actually due to the diktat of militant elements, who had decreed suspension of such acts as might inconvenience the common man during the holy month of Ramzan. He reiterated that it was the writ of the militants which ran in the Valley and that the state government had been rendered ineffective. He warned that after Eid the situation could even change radically for the worse unless the Government and the political parties like Congress and NC sat up and took due pre-emptive action. He pointed out that militants had taken a strong anti-minority position and that the latter were being threatened through letters and telephone calls to quit the Valley forthwith.

Tirath informed the House that some *atankwadis* (terrorists) were forcing closure of restaurants and eateries during Ramzan and would strike in a big way after Eid. He concluded that it was a great pity that neither the Centre nor the state had the courage to admit the ground reality and take appropriate steps to face it.

As they say, truth is bitter. Chidambaram was so rattled that after question hour he walked up to Tirath and very strongly disputed his observations, terming them "alarmist". The whole House watched him trying to make his point, waving his finger at the veteran MP.

The Times of India in its issue of April 27, 1989, reported: "CONG MP DISPUTES GOVT. CLAIM ON J&K":

A Congress M.P., Mr. Tirath Ram Amla, surprised the Rajya Sabha towards the end of question hour today when he disputed the version of the situation in Kashmir presented to the House by the minister of state for home affairs, Mr. P Chidambaram.

Mr. Chidambaram, however, said Mr. Amla was painting an "alarmist picture" and that it was wrong to generalize from a few incidents that all Hindus and

Sikhs in Kashmir were being threatened by subversive elements. Mr. Amla claimed that some elements were forcing the closure of restaurants and eating places during the month of Ramzan. He claimed that if the incidents of disruption in the state had come down it was because the terrorists had decided to call a halt to their activities because of Ramzan. They would strike again after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

So agitated was Mr. Chidambaram with Mr. Amla's intervention that he walked up to him after question hour and was seen making some points to him emphasizing whatever he was saying by waving his finger at him. Before walking up to Mr. Amla, Mr. Chidambaram was also seen talking in an agitated manner to his colleague in the ministry, Mr. Santosh Mohan Dev, and the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, Mr. M.M. Jacob.

Atal Behari Vajpayee, who had asked the question about the infiltration of foreign-trained terrorists into Kashmir, was not satisfied with the minister's written answer which only talked of "subversive" elements indulging in violent activities in the state. On being pressed to answer specifically whether any of these elements had crossed over from the border, Mr. Chidambaram revealed that 75 infiltrators from across the border had been apprehended recently by the security forces. They were not armed, he said.

Chidambaram repeated that the government had taken a series of measures to contain the activities of anti-social elements in Kashmir and the results of these steps should be evident in the next few weeks. In response to a supplementary question from Vajpayee about the report that 400 infiltrators had crossed over to India in Kashmir, Chidambaram disagreed with the figure. He said the government's information was that "a sizeable number" of infiltrators had gathered in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and were getting ready to cross over. He said the government was confident that it would be able to stop them.

Chidambaram said there was no difference between the position of the state government and the Centre on the question of tackling the disturbance in Kashmir. In fact, he said, the action was being taken jointly with the state government.

The minister told the Rajya Sabha members that the Government was aware of the existence of training camps for terrorists in Pakistan and also in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir."

As part of the party cover-up, Professor Saif-ud-din Soz, an MP from J&K, told the press that Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi had been "embarrassed and surprised" by Tirath Ram Amla's statement in the House. Soz termed Tirath's statement an "exaggeration, misleading and a misrepresentation of facts" to the press. He even charged Tirath of giving a "communal colour" to the events in the Valley and opined that his "shortsighted outburst" was bound to hurt the sentiments of Kashmiri Muslims.

As expected, the Congress central leadership now formally dissociated itself from Tirath's observations in the House and the party general secretary K.N. Singh told the press that the statement made by Mr. Tirath Ram Amla was against party policy. At one point of time, there was even a vague hint about throwing him out of the party, which obviously was not entertained by Rajiv Gandhi, since he was aware of how much Mrs. Gandhi had trusted Tirath. He was also aware how this senior MP had over the years proved his total commitment to the Congress but was known to not ever budge on a stand at the cost of his own convictions.

Tirath's conscience had not allowed him to remain a mute listener to Chidambaram's version of events and his optimistic eyewash. He had no option but to stand up and contradict him and was ready to pay the price for it. He felt that at such a critical moment in the history of his beloved state, truth had to be told to the nation, however unpalatable it might be to the people who were then at the helm of the affairs.

It was, however, the J&K Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah, still hurting over Tirath's role in his previous ouster, who spewed invective against Tirath. He twisted and misconstrued Tirath's speech and its contents in a manner that was likely to give the impression that Tirath had condemned and branded the entire community of Kashmiri Muslims as rabid fundamentalists, hellbent on throwing Hindus and Sikhs out of the Valley, as Islamic fundamentalists who were forcing the non-Muslims to observe the Ramzan fast. Ironical, since Tirath's secular credentials

and the fact that the majority of his closest friends were Muslim, were known to all in Kashmir. Tirath's typical fearlessness in pre-empting and asking for action against what was sure to become a national problem and destroy peace in the Valley was unfairly made to seem an accusation against all Muslims and not merely the *atankwadis*, as Tirath had clearly mentioned.

His remarks that Tirath's "statement would hurt the feelings of Muslims of Kashmir" were fraught with grave and dangerous consequences, with the potential to incite diehard communal militants to acts of violence against Tirath and his family.

Tirath immediately wrote to Farooq, flatly denying and refuting the charges levelled by Farooq against him and enclosed an authorised copy of the House proceedings and his speech. He urged Farooq to retract his earlier statements publicly as soon as possible. Farooq Abdullah's letter, in reply to Tirath's, was non-committal and full of sanctimonious words but no more. When Tirath ran into him at Eid, he was good enough to express his satisfaction with Tirath's version of the issue and promised shortly to clear Tirath's name publicly. Tirath was beyond caring by then, confident in the knowledge that the people of the state knew what he stood for. His prophetic words in Parliament were by now being seen for the facts that they actually were.

On August 16, 1989, following Independence Day, Tirath got an opportunity to address the House once again with reference to the alarming situation in Kashmir. He reminded the House about the observations made by him only three-and-a-half months earlier on April 27, which, unfortunately, had drawn the ire of not only the state's ruling party but also senior ministers in the Congress.

Events in the Valley since then had fully vindicated his observations of that day. He further said that the situation now being faced in the Valley was alarming. The militants held the Valley to ransom and their dictates were obeyed by almost the entire population in both letter and spirit.

Najma Heptullah says in her note "*Speaking again in the House on the 16th August, 1989, Shri Amla said that when he spoke last time on the Jammu & Kashmir problem, his statement was opposed and he was told, "No, we are*

very much in control of it. What you say is exaggerated.” But the subsequent turn of events proved that Shri Amla was right. Referring to what he said earlier and how prophetic it all was, Shri Amla said in the House:

“But subsequent events have proved what I said on that day, to which my friends and my senior colleagues objected to, was correct. Since then, all the calls for *bandh*, all the commands of the extremists, are being observed very accurately, I would say, by most of the people in the Valley.”

In the same speech Shri Amla made a fervent appeal to the Government to take effective steps to control the situation. He said:

“This is the time when the Home Ministry must do something. Mere saying that things will take shape themselves will not help, wishful thinking will not help; we must be realistic.”

The extremists had recently given a call for *bandh* on August 14, prior to Independence Day, which was compliantly observed by one and all in the Valley. A similar call for *bandh* was observed on India's Independence Day, August 15. Not one shop had opened, nor was there any transport on the streets: even state government buses had not plied. In addition, the militants wanted the people to observe a 'black night' and ninety per cent obeyed that diktat as well, with even streetlights switched off.

This time there was no rebuttal of Tirath's observations. Nobody from the ruling benches got up to brand his statement as “alarmist”, nor was there any protest from any quarter. The appalling events in the Valley could no longer be denied by anybody.

It is Tirath's unhappiest speculation that had the Government but paid heed to his warning of April 27, 1989 and had taken appropriate steps to contain and destroy militancy before it grew to monstrous proportions, matters might have stood very differently today.

The Centre did not act fast enough on the warnings conveyed by Tirath both inside and outside Parliament. The first bomb blast in a bus at Khanyar took place

in November 1989 three months after Tirath's speech in Parliament. As predicted by Tirath then, all restaurants and bars were forced close. Next came the turn of the cinema halls which shut down after the bomb blast in Shiraz Cinema. Pakistan defeated us on every front. After the cinema closure, educational institutions were burnt to pave the way for madrasas. Then came a time when the Government of India itself seemed to have run away. The banks were closed, the post offices did not function and there was no visible security. Cross-border infiltration had started. Reactionary forces had come out in the open and started defying the state. It is well said, "*Lamho ne khata ki; sadiyo ne saza paayi*". Because of the lack of security and the threat, Tirath had predicted that minority Hindus and Sikhs would be forced to leave and they did. Three hundred thousand people became refugees in their own country.

Cross-border militancy in the state is now over 15 years old and has claimed thousands of innocent lives, caused the displacement of over three lakh people besides the destruction of bridges, schools, hospitals and private property worth hundreds of crores of rupees. History is replete with instances when short-term political considerations, manipulations and sheer carelessness and neglect have often landed countries in tragic quagmires from which it has taken centuries to emerge.

Perhaps it will be different with Kashmir, once deemed a paradise on earth...All Tirath could say then was that he did his best as an MP and as a Kashmiri: spoke up when others muffled their mouths, took his business right back to the Valley despite militancy (a fact much appreciated by the present chief Minister of J&K, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed in his enclosed note) and always kept both heart and hearth affectionately open to people of all faiths.

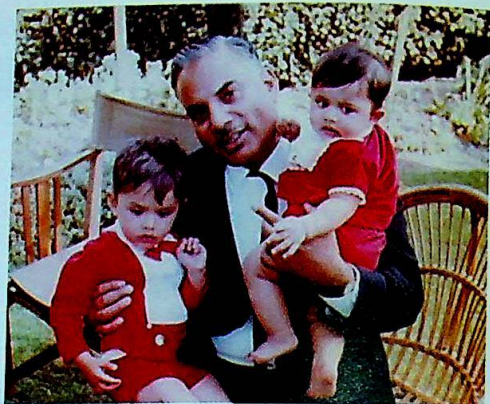
Mrs. Gandhi at a dinner at Tirath's home



On another occasion...



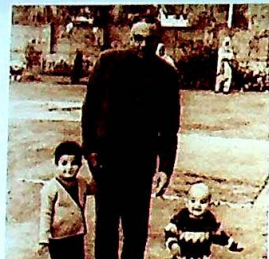
Amit, Vishal, Arjun, Vikas, Rohini, Rohit



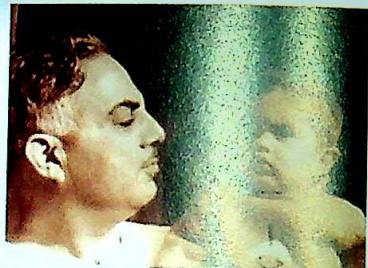
With Arjun and Amit



With Rohit



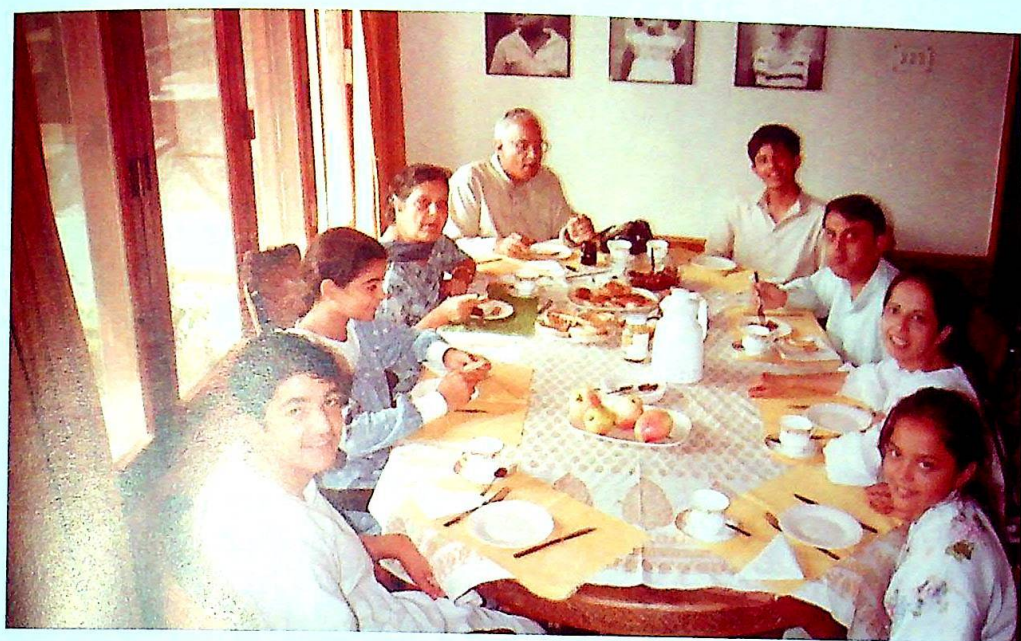
With Vikas and Vishal



With Arjun



Tirath and Satya with their grand children



Vishal, Kanika, Satya, Tirath, Amit, Krishan, Usha & Puja at the breakfast table



Rohini and Rohit



Vikas, Vishal and Kanika



Puja with Biji



Puja and Amit on 'Rakhi'

*Memories of Hotel Broadway
from 1956 brochure*

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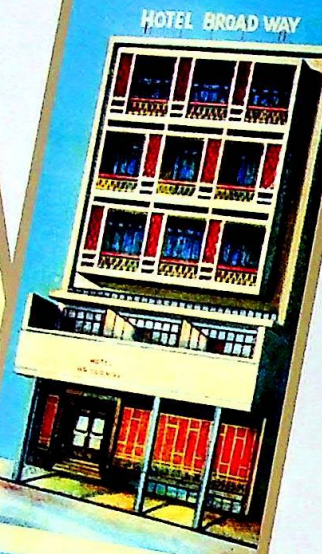
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DINNER



HOTEL Broadway

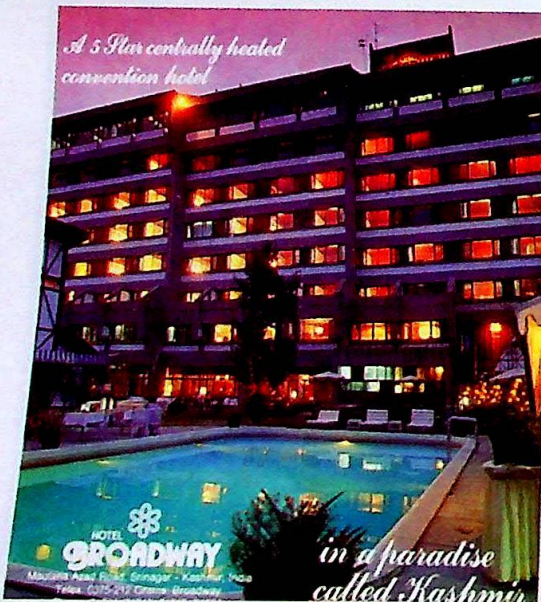
ASAFALI ROAD NEW DELHI

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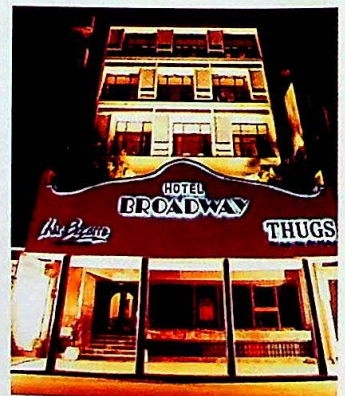
GRAND "LUXURY"



*Brochure of
Hotel Broadway, Srinagar*



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BROADWAY
EASTABLISHED IN 1956
India's first ISO 9002 Hotel



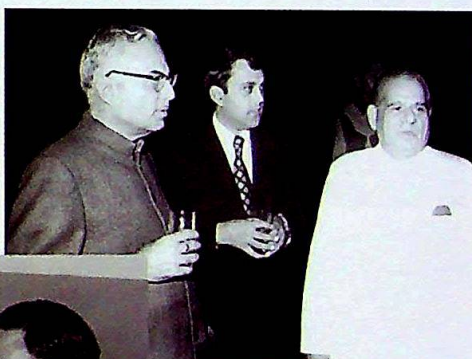
Hotel Broadway, 2005



Lala Ram Prasad and Ahmed Sahib with Tirath



Gautam Khanna, Sati Sahni



*Tirath and Krishan with
Rai Bahadur Oberoi*



*G M Sadiq, G L Dogra
& Tirath*

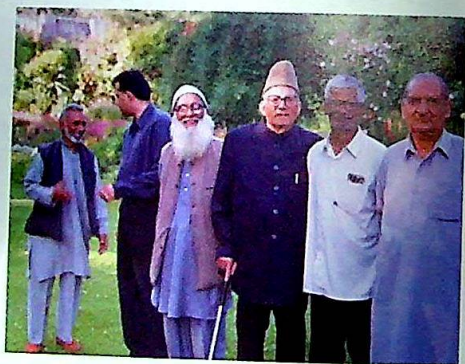


Kanvinde's modern façade for the Broadway Hotel, Srinagar

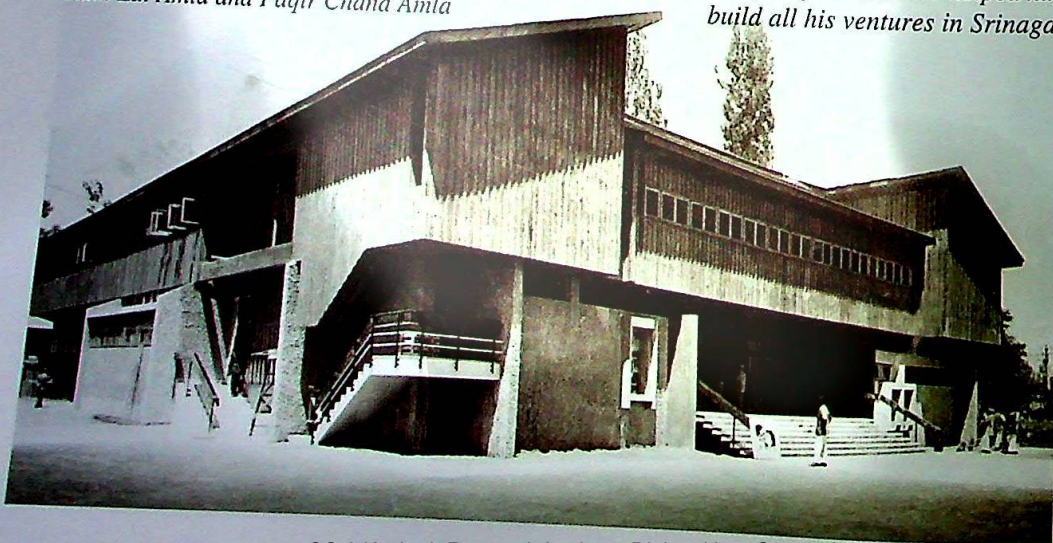
A P Kanvinde

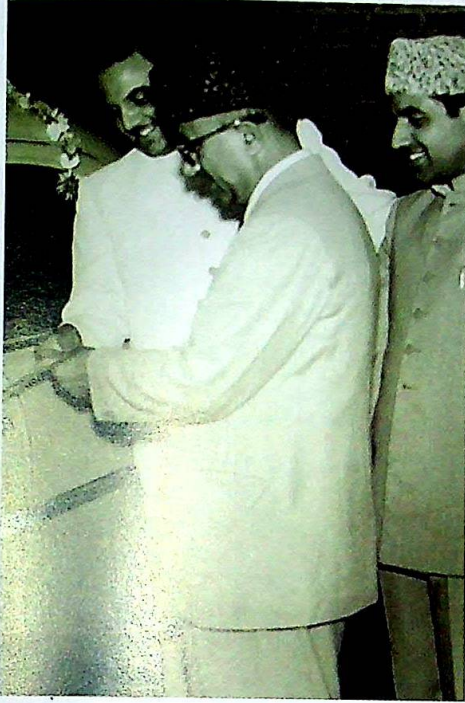


*Dr. Bansi Lal Amla, Prem Soni,
Ram Lal Amla and Faqir Chand Amla*



*With the faithful team who helped him
build all his ventures in Srinagar*





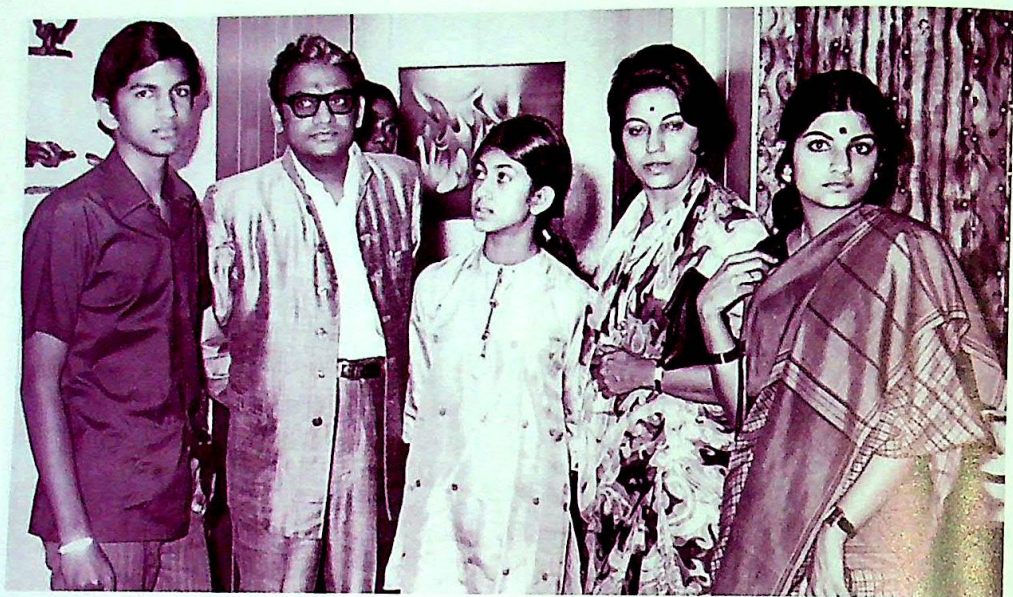
*G. M. Sadiq inaugurating Tirath's
newly acquired dealership
for the Premier Padmini*



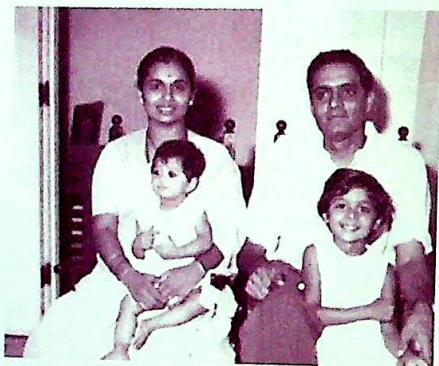
With Seth Lal Chand ji



Trilochan Dutta, D. P. Dhar, G. M. Sadiq, Pestonjee, Tirath, Ahmed Sahib and Mir Qasim



Anand, Harish, Anuja, Indira & Radhika Mahindra



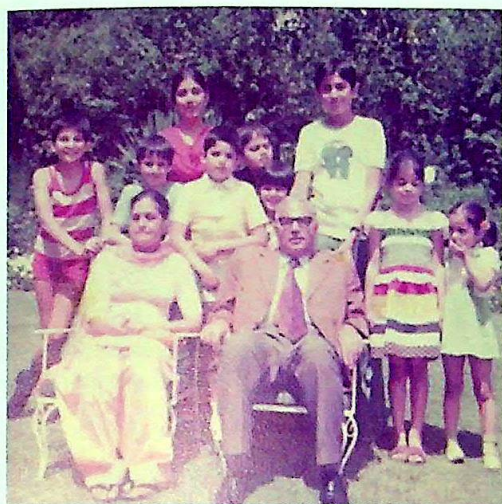
A surprise 55th Birthday party for Tirath with Harish Mahindra and Pitaji flanking him

Arvind and Sharayu Daftary with Czaee and Gauri

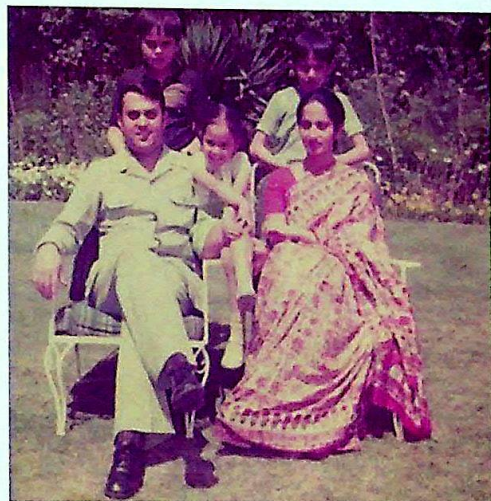


Keshub and Sudha Mahindra

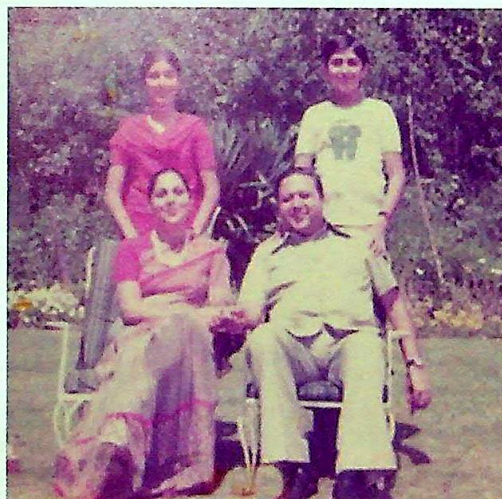




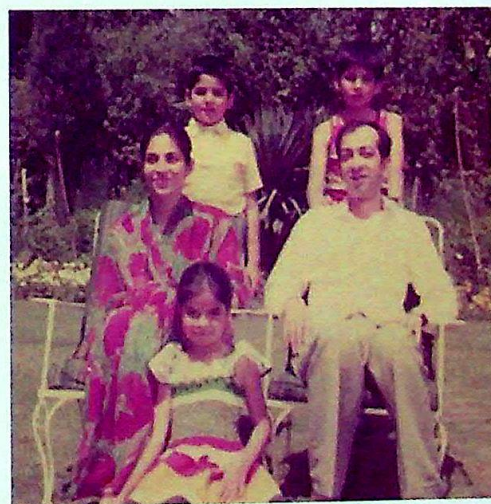
Tirath & Satya with their grand children



Krishan and Usha with Arjun, Amit and Pooja



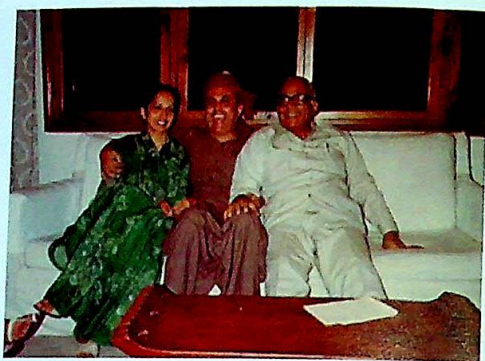
*Vijay Lakshmi and Ramesh
with Rohit and Rohini*



*Kiran and Kumar with Vikas,
Vishal and Kanika*



*Satya blowing her birthday candle
with Kiran, Krishan and Kumar*

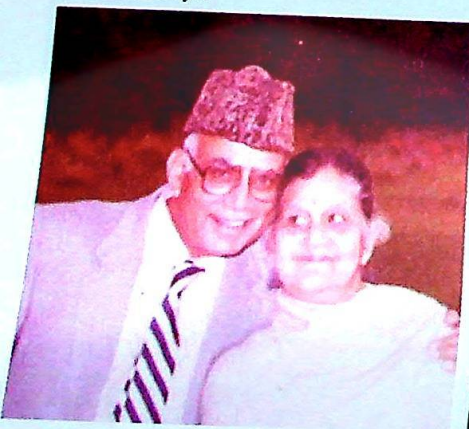


With Krishan and Usha



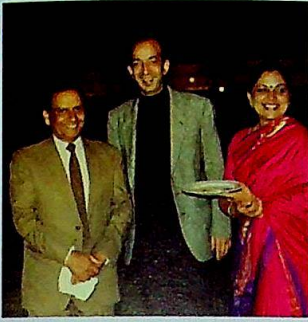
Deskit's wedding

Tirath & Satya



Krishan, Vijay Lakshmi and Kiran





*K K Mehra, Kumar &
Vijay Lakshmi*



*Davinder, Akhtar &
Mussadaq*



*Dr. Naqshband,
Dr. Allaqaband & Kumar*



*Nazeer Bakshi, Dishi Mehta, Tirath, Rauf & Muzaffar Jan.
on Tirath and Satya's 50th Wedding Anniversary*

With Anil Bhan

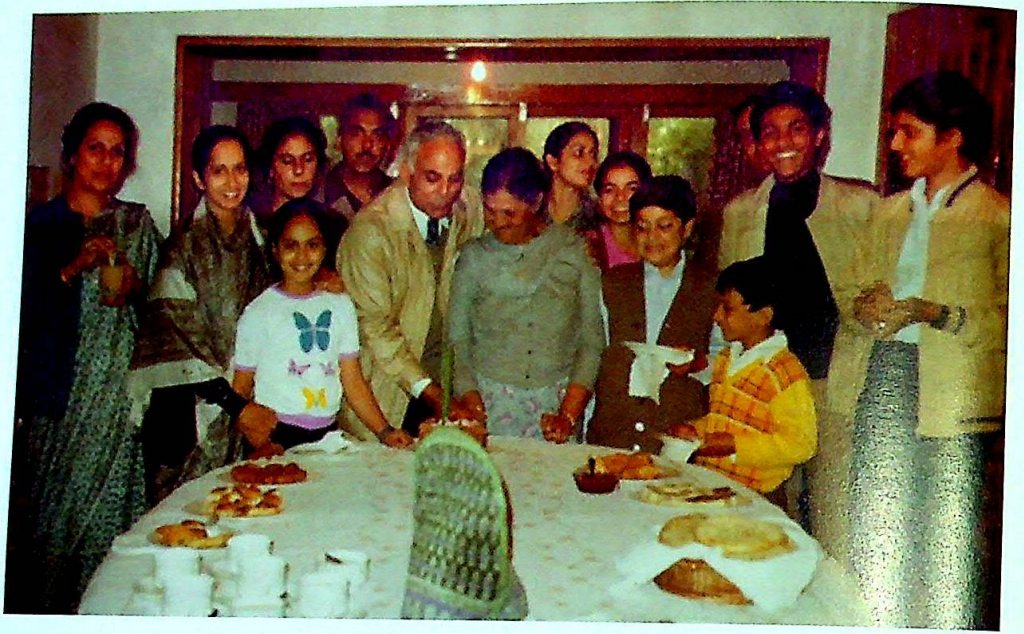


*Sujata, Pradeep Dinodia,
Tirath & Guga*



With Mr. & Mrs. P N Kaul

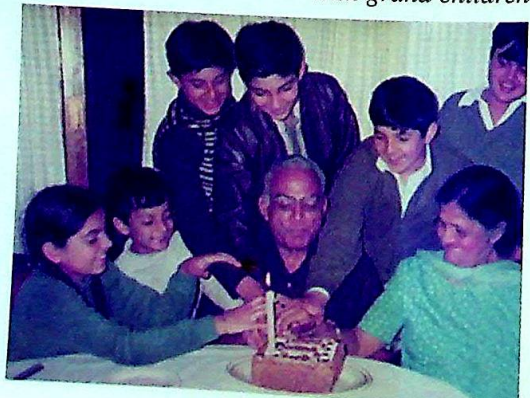
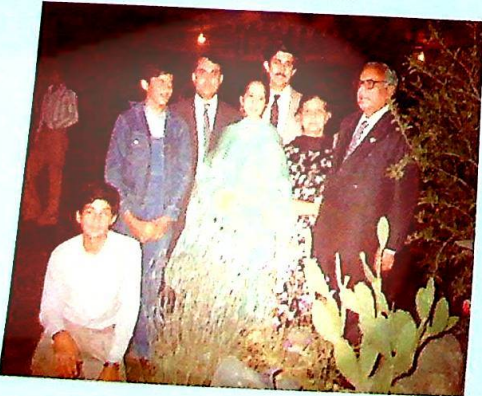




Prem Soni, Satya, Vimla & Tirath

*Vikas, Arjun, Rohit,
Krishan, Usha, Satya & Tirath*

With grand children





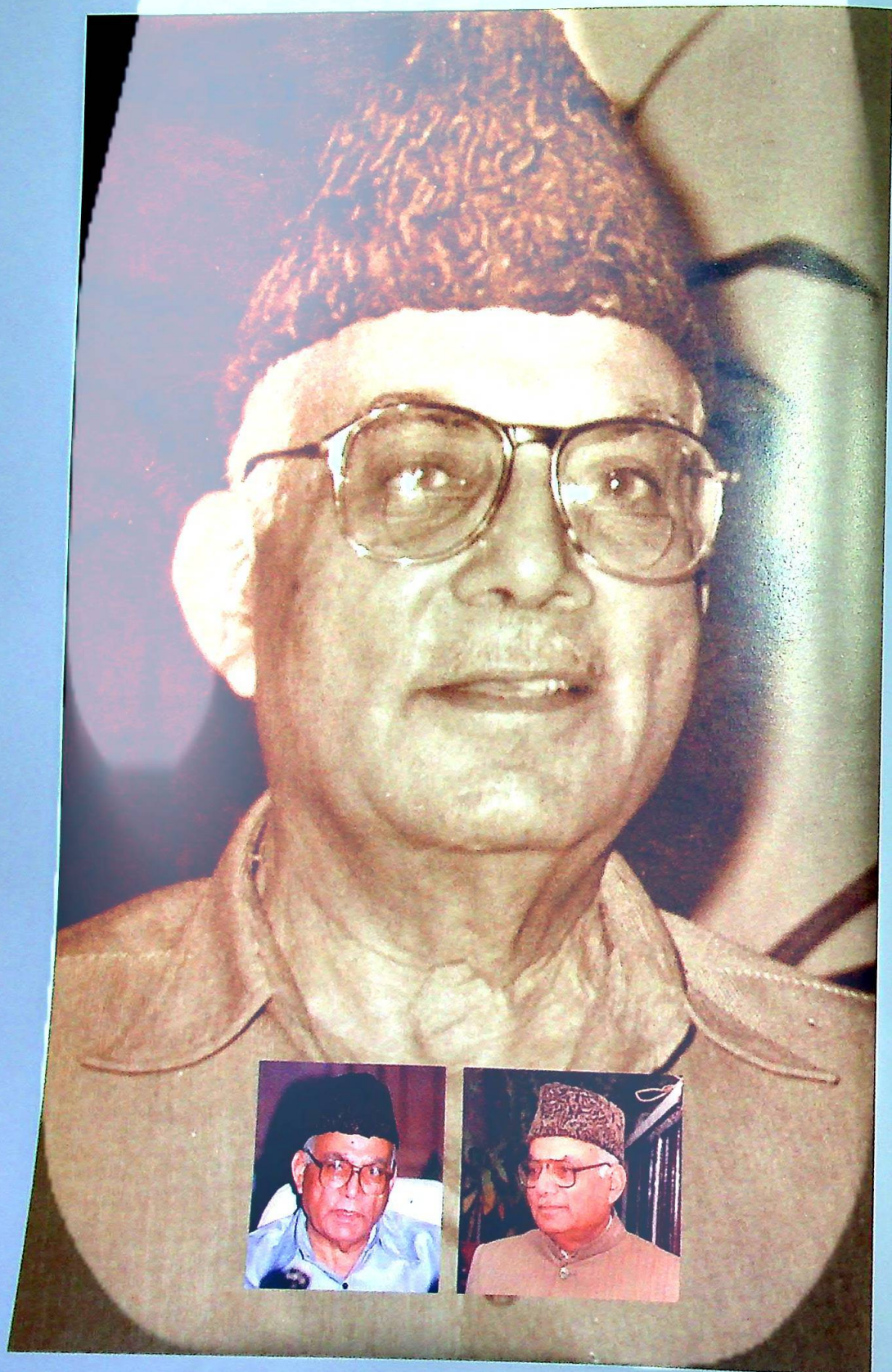


*Vijay, Kiran, Usha, Krishan, Vijay Lakshmi and Ramesh
with their parents*

Family and friends in Srinagar in the 80s







Part - IV

Autumn Sonata

Part - IV

Autumn Sonata

My Friend Bhim Sen

By Tirath Ram Amla

In this glorious adventure called life, you count your own people like jewels. Lala Bhim Sen's narrative of my life cannot be complete without my own voice describing the one person today who has known me longer than anybody else: my dear friend, Bhim Sen.

It was sometime in the early 80s that I started feeling that I was losing my memory, particularly that of the recent past. Naturally, I got worried and went to consult with my good old friend, the renowned Kashmiri physician, Dr. Allaqaband. After a thorough examination, he advised me to instantly and drastically reduce the workload which I then handled or face the possibility of a complete mental breakdown. I recall with horror that he said that it might even lead to madness.

Dr. Allaqaband's diagnosis and prescription left me speechless with shock and I cast about frantically in my mind for someone who could come to my rescue at such a critical juncture. What I feared most was that the wrong choice would lead to disaster, as my failing mental faculties might tempt him or her to take undue advantage of the situation and cheat me at every step. At that time, with Krishan looking after the Srinagar hotel, Kumar after the cinema and Vijay after the Delhi hotel, the entire load of all the dealerships was on me. What I needed was a confidante whom I could totally trust.

As luck would have it, Bhim Sen had just then retired from the Indian Forest Service. Bhim Sen, since our days together in Muzaffarabad and all through college, had been my dearest friend. I was certain that he alone could be trusted with this responsibility. One day I went to see him at his Jammu residence and asked whether he could help me in my business. He replied that he had put in 33 years in Government service and had made up his mind to spend his retirement in relaxed peace. Moreover, he had his advanced years to think of and the critical fact that he had no experience of conducting a business.

It was then that I was forced to play the trump card which so far I had kept up my sleeve. I told him about Dr. Allaqaband's verdict that unless I immediately

shed my heavy burden, I might have to face the prospect of turning insane. I added that it was up to him now to either relax and enjoy his retired life in peace or come forward to assist an old friend. That, naturally, clinched the issue and he agreed to help me in any way I wished, stipulating just two conditions – one, that he would not accept any money and two, that he would be free to give it up as and when he felt he could not cope. I said that the idea of paying him had never crossed my mind and that his second condition was both reasonable and acceptable. That is how our old and intimate friendship assumed a new, rejuvenated avatar.

I made Bhim Sen sit beside me in my office and over the next few days, passed on almost the entire business burden to him. My role shrank to sitting by his side and keeping him company. It did not take long for me to also pass on my personal and political affairs to him.

It was thus that Bhim Sen became deeply involved in each and every aspect of my life. His valuable help led to the build-up of my business base at Jammu from scratch to a towering automobile business, after the fiasco of my partnership with Pandit Trilochan Dutta. Bhim Sen's hard work, integrity and sound advice played a vital role in my success. It was not surprising, therefore, that both of us bid goodbye to my Jammu business venture at the same time in the mid 90s, when we could afford to quit honourably ahead.

Bhim Sen's loyal and true friendship continues to pay dividends even now. He looks after the administrative affairs of the Tirath Ram Satya Devi Charitable Trust as well as other matters of vital interest to me. It is only a few months back that he made me richer by lakhs of rupees, by following an elusive and vague clue to my owning a piece of land at Kathua. I had absolutely no inkling of it, let alone any formal record.

Now at age 92 this book is his greatest gift to me. It is he who has contributed most of the material to this book, since it is he and he alone, who knows almost every facet of my life, spanning over more than nine decades. He has truly been an incredible friend, philosopher and guide to me all these years.

Tirath Ram Satya Devi Trust

Tirath's propensity for giving and inability to say "No" to every plaintive story of need was well-known. The Managing Director of Maruti Udyog Limited, R.C. Bhargava, who had by now become a close friend, encouraged him to formalize this strength and set up a proper registered trust. Tirath mentioned this to his children and was pleasantly surprised to learn that they had already established a trust in their parents' honour called the Tirath Ram Satya Devi (TRSD) Charitable Trust. Through their business and personal contributions, the Trust was already reaching many poor people in need of help.

It was no surprise to anyone when Tirath decided to take the Trust to a much higher level. After bequeathing to his children what he wished to, he donated most of his properties to the Trust, thus ensuring at one stroke, its unlimited potential to truly make a difference.

Tirath quickly realised that one of the most important areas of benefit to the underprivileged was in the health sector. A proper diagnostic centre was the obvious first step, since government hospitals could not meet the needs of the people. While he was keen to establish one in Srinagar, the dangers from terrorism had made that impossible at that time. Instead, the TRSD Diagnostic Centre was inaugurated by Dr Mustafa Kamal, the then Minister of Health, in Jammu on January 12, 1998 (a day before Lohri, the ancient festival of renewal). The Centre was built on a piece of property in Gandhi Nagar donated by the Trust, the location hospitably near some very poor areas.

The late Dr. Tilak Amla had been one of Tirath's favourite nephews. His dynamic wife, Dr. Veena Amla, took it upon herself to set up and run this Centre. She began hiring doctors, physicians, gynaecologists, pediatricians, orthopaedists and dentists, thus ensuring the full gamut of services needed by the poor.

The TRSD Charitable Trust spared no expense to develop the Centre and today it attends to the medical needs of an average of 60 people a day, almost 22,000 people a year. Dr. Amla has since added a blood laboratory and an ultrasound facility. The Trust also appointed prominent doctors to the board of the TRSD Diagnostic Centre, thus ensuring that the more serious medical cases would get proper referral to the big government hospitals. To date the TRSD Diagnostic Centre has helped over 1,54,000 people in need of medical attention, saving thousands of lives.



*Dr. Mustafa Kamal
addressing the gathering.*

*Inauguration of the Diagnostic
Clinic by Dr. Mustafa Kamal on
11 Feb. 1998.*



*Doctors and trustees of
the TRSD Charitable Trust*

*Tirath with Lala Bhim Sen Soi in
the Dispensary*



But this was just the beginning for the Trust. Tirath knew that the other remarkable way to help and change peoples' lives was through education. Not only did he ensure that proper doctors could attend to thousands of people, he also planned for many of those people to become doctors themselves, quickly setting up medical scholarships to give deserving children a future they could only dream about. Nor did the Trust stay content with social work in the big cities alone: in its search for bright and deserving children held back by poverty, the Trust went to J&K's remote areas, too, such as Kargil, Ladakh, Uri and Poonch.

Since not every child wanted to be a doctor, the Trust established educational scholarships for engineering and computer science. Although the TRSD Trust operates on a much larger scale today, Tirath has not forgotten how it all began. He still continues to help families in need of basic necessities like food and clothing, even finding suitable husbands for their daughters and helping with their weddings.

Now, the TRSD Trust is about to embark upon an ambitious project in New Delhi to support street children by not just providing them food and shelter, but also equipping them with the skills necessary to become chefs. The Trust, with technical help from Old World Hospitality Private Limited (a company run by his daughter Vijay Lakshmi, grandson Rohit Khattar and his wife Rashmi), plans to launch a community kitchen project, wherein under-privileged children will be trained to become chefs and will also receive training in English language, information technology and other such basic skills, thereby creating a career path for them. While some batches of these trained children will be absorbed by Old World Hospitality itself, it is hoped that soon these children will have a wider acceptance and will be able to find jobs in other hotel and restaurant chains. Moreover it is expected that this kitchen would provide hundreds of meals daily to street children in conjunction with an NGO. This initiative would give Tirath a chance to interact firsthand with the Trust's work on a daily basis during the six or seven months that he lives in Delhi.

At the end of the day, avers Tirath, it's all about people. About loving and giving, about following your heart and not letting your better, braver instincts be cramped by timidity and "what-will-people-say". Of taking your chances and living by a few good, solid principles that will wear well despite malicious fate and keep you steadfast through the bad times that the law of averages arranges for each one of us. In his way, he wishes to keep that law in balance for as many people as he is able to.

Afterword

By Tirath Ram Amla

Today I look back at my life with great satisfaction and nostalgia. I've lived it to the fullest and feel that I succeeded in carving a small niche for myself in the business, political and social spectrum of my beloved state of Jammu & Kashmir and elsewhere, too. I would like to think that I created an equally important place in the hearts of people. This book recounts many of the important phases in my life, my disappointments, my triumphs. What it may not really dwell upon much are my emotions and feelings – difficult to put on paper.

I would like to thank the people who mean most to me. My dear wife Satya, my children Krishan, Usha, Kiran, Kumar, Vijay and her husband, Ramesh, who left us when he was too young and is missed. I would like to thank my grandchildren and great grandchildren who have given me so much love. My parents, my in-laws, brothers, sisters, so many nephews and nieces and all my dear friends, many of whom have written such touching messages which are part of this book.

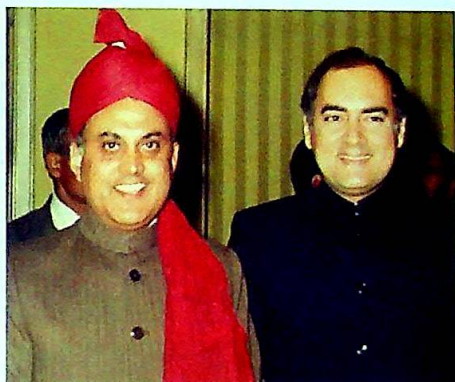
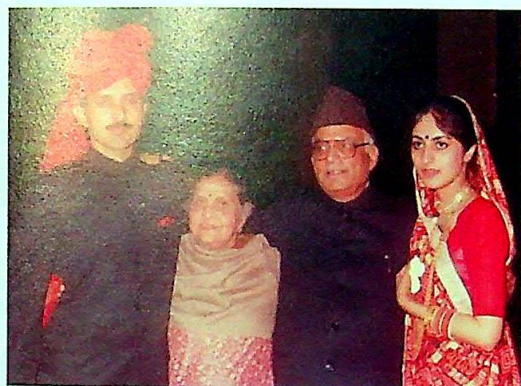
I truly feel I have been blessed by God since most of my friendships have been lifelong ones and in most cases, our families too, have become part of each others' lives. I apologize in advance if Bhim Sen and I have missed out on mentioning any friends, family members and well-wishers. My memory is fading. I pray that they and their families will forgive me. If I had to write even a few lines on each and every one of my dear friends, that would be a book in itself.

For them and for all the affectionate, wonderful people who have enriched my life, for my precious and loving family, for all the excitement, adventure and fulfillment that God has given me, what can I say but a heartfelt thanks to the Powers That Be.

بھجنے کی دل کی آگ نہیں زہرے خاک بھی -
ہر گاہ درخت گور پہ میری چنار کا -

*Bujhne ki dil ki aag nahin zere khakh bhi
Hoga darakht gaur peh meri chinar ka...*

*Even after death, the fire in my heart will blaze,
For a chinar will grow on my grave...*



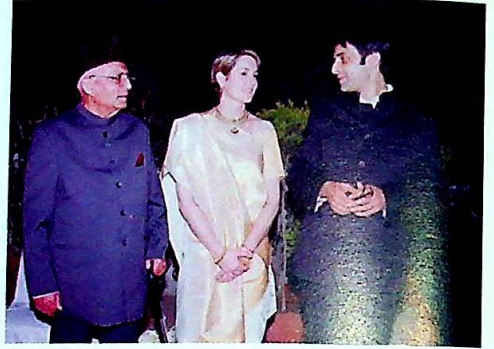
On Rohit and Rashmi's Wedding, February 1986





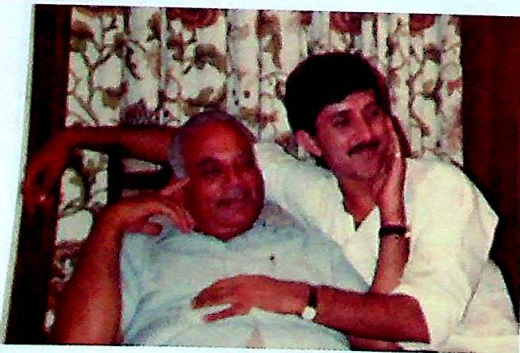
Arjun, Puja, Uday and Amit

With Vishal and Sarah



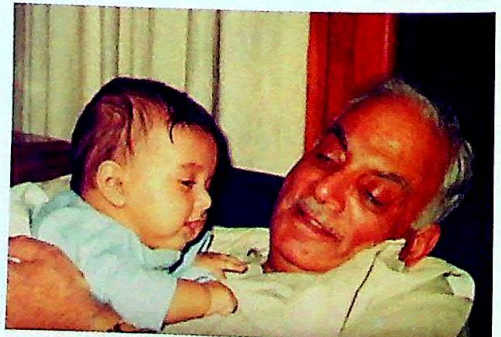
Vijay Lakshmi, Tirath, Rashmi

With Rohini



With Rohit

With Rishiv





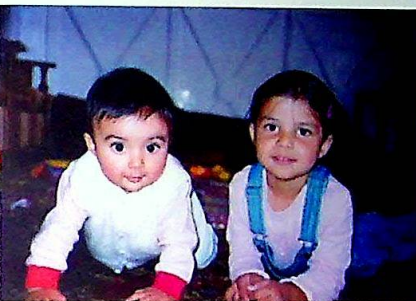
Puja & Uday Patnaik



Puja with Neel



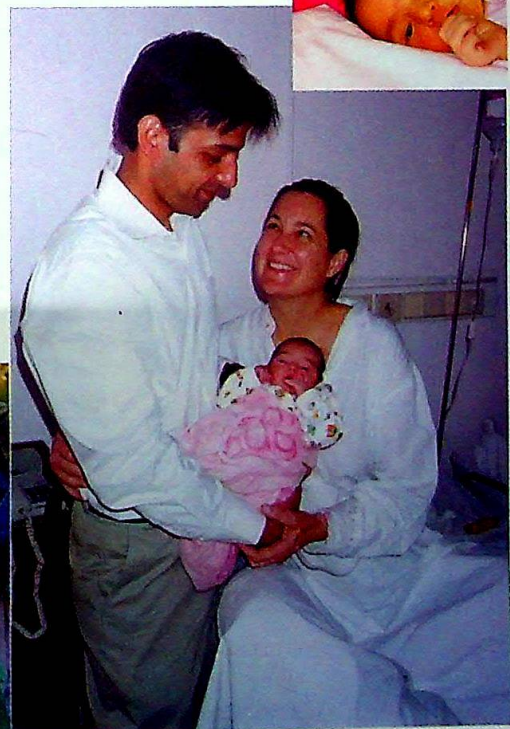
Vikas & Sunanda



Nairah & Lila

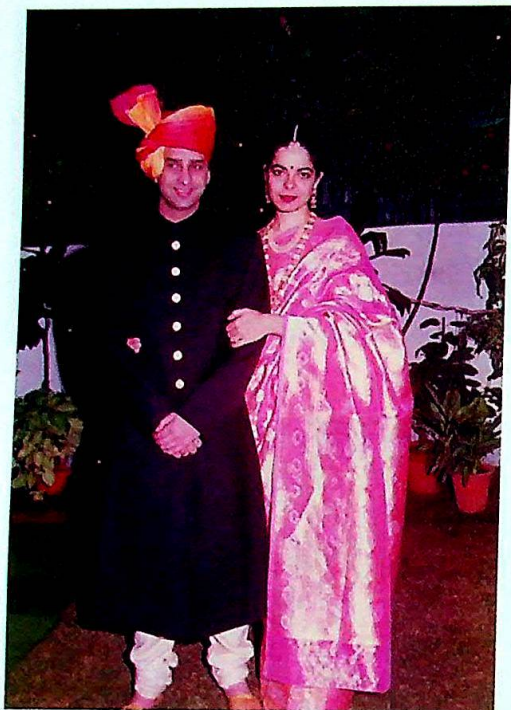
*Uma Iris
born Sept. 1, 2005*

*Vishal, Sarah &
Savannah Satya*



*Satya with
Savannah Satya
in her lap*

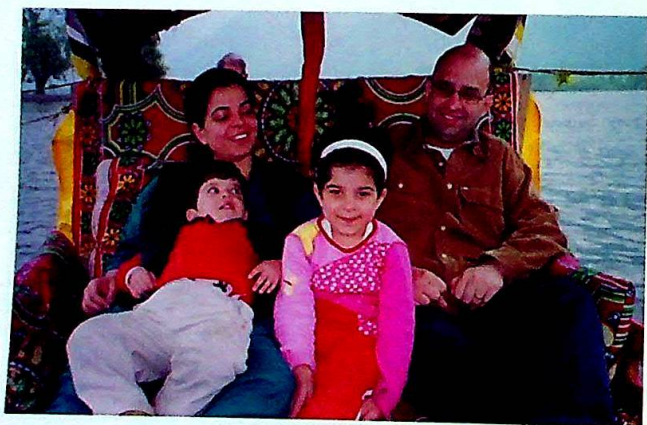




Sanjay & Kanika Seth

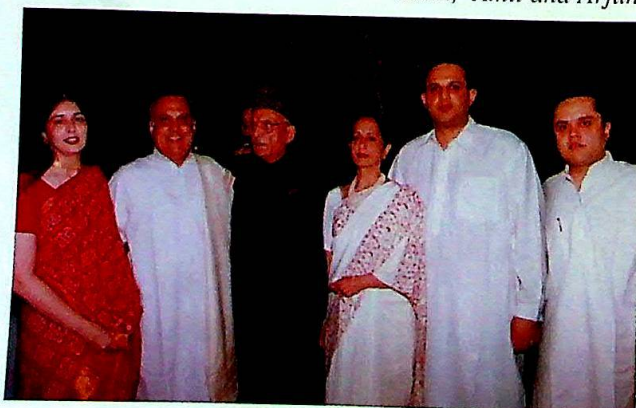


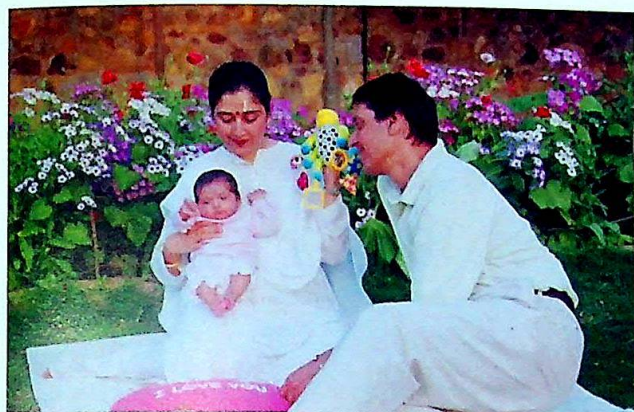
Manya & Kabir



*Kanika, Sanjay Seth,
Kabir & Manya*

*Sonali, Krishan, Tirath,
Usha, Amit and Arjun*

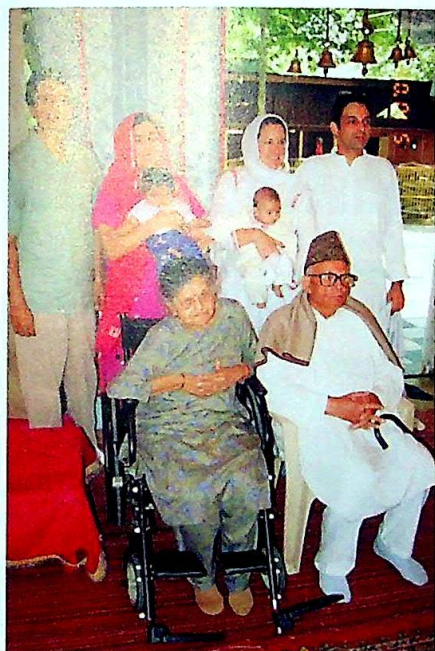




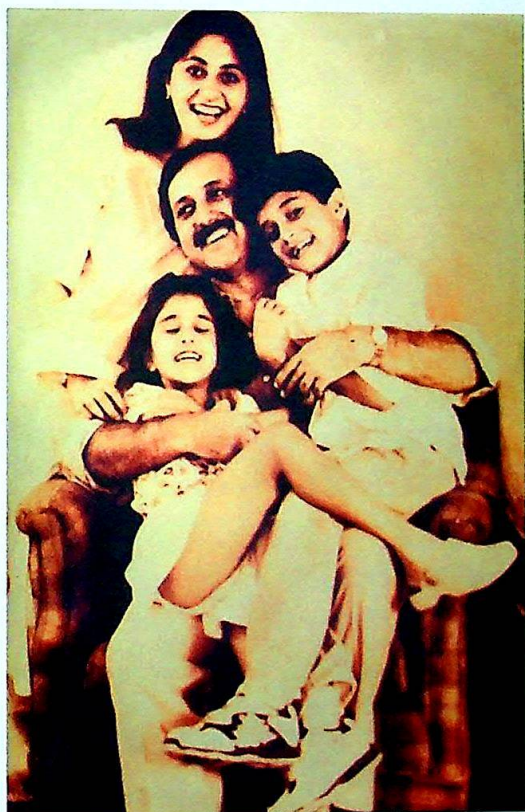
Rohini & Rohit Kapur with Vedaa



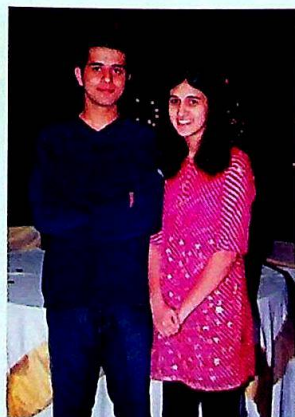
*Tirath & Satya with Rohini,
Rohit & Vedaa*



*With Rohit Kapur, Rohini, Vedaa,
Sarah, Savanah, Vishal
at Kheer Bhavani*



*Rashmi,
Rohit, Tarika
& Rishiv*



*Rishiv &
Tarika*

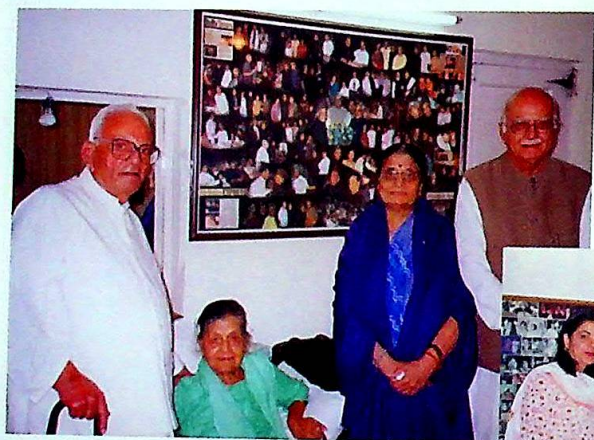
*Tirath &
Satya with
Tarika &
Rishiv*



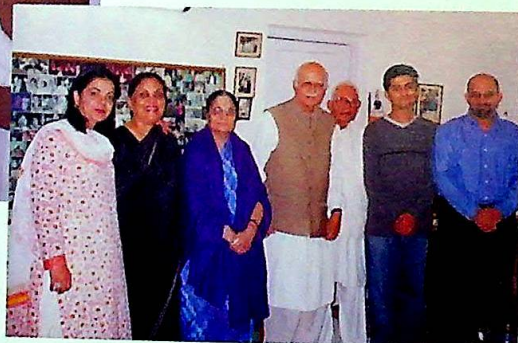


At Atal ji's house

On another occasion...



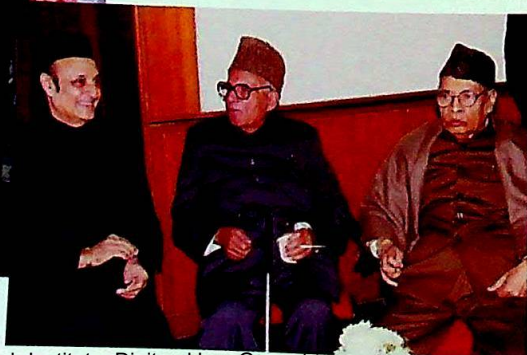
When Advani Ji and Kamla Ji came calling home on Diwali - with Kanika, Vijay Lakshmi, Rishiv and Sanjay



*Tirath with V.P. Singh, I.K. Gujral
Dr. Naresh Trehan, D D Thakur
and Dr. Kler*



*With Dr. Karan Singh and
P. V. Narsimha Rao*

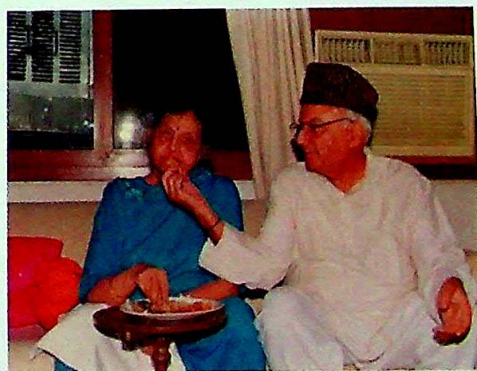
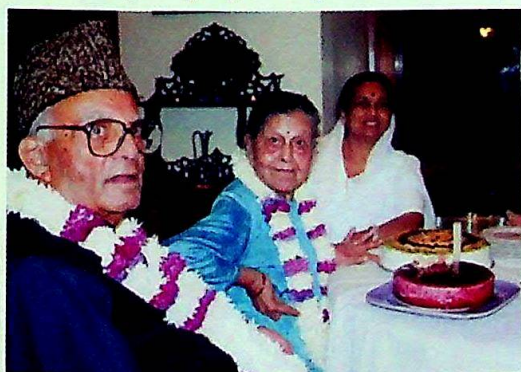




A candid moment



With Sharayu Daftary on Satya's 84th Birthday

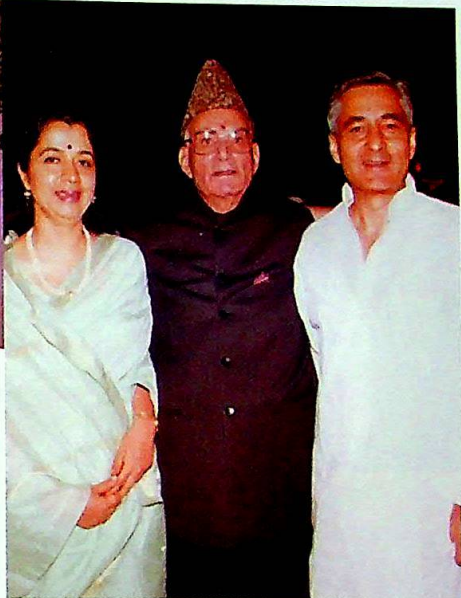




85th birthday



With K.K. Mehra and Romila



*With Thakur Tirath Singh
and Ameeta*



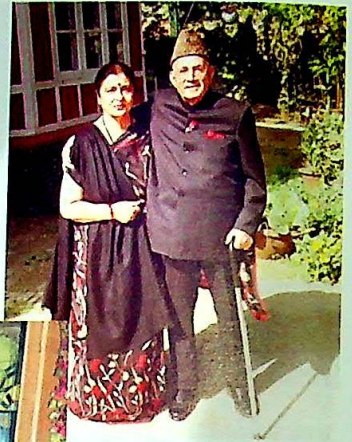
With Bhim Sen Soi

*With niece Kirpa, her husband Shyam Sehgal
and their son Micky*

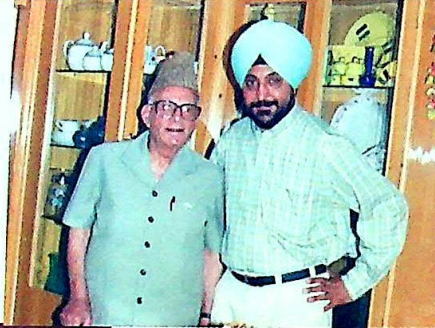




With
Sashi
Maini ▶



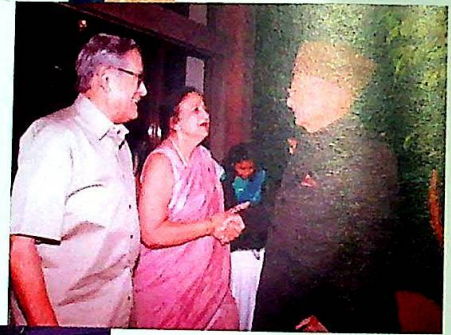
Shoib, Shaida
(Ayat in lap), Tirath,
Nazeer Bakshi,
Mona & Satya



◀ With K.S. Johal



K.K. Mehra, Adarsh
Anand, Tirath and
R. C. Bhargava

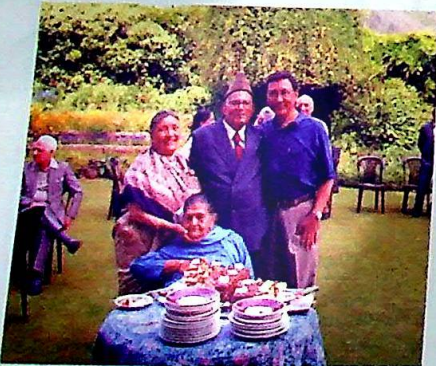


With P.K. and Shanta Dave

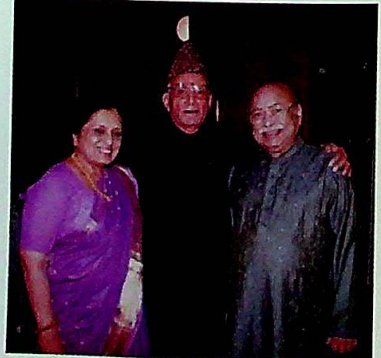
With Pal & Pinto Narboo

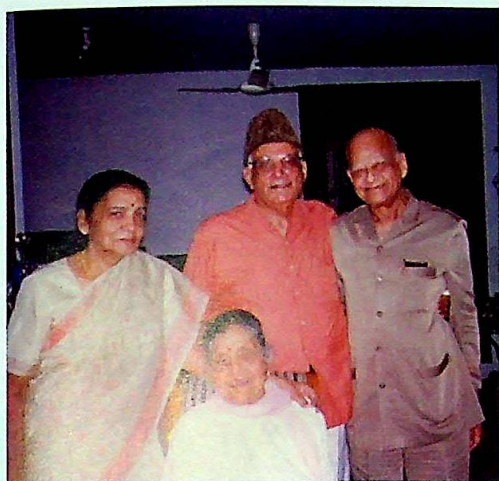


Krishan, Tirath Ram,
Adarsh Anand,
◀ Dr. Farooq Abdullah
and M L Fotedar

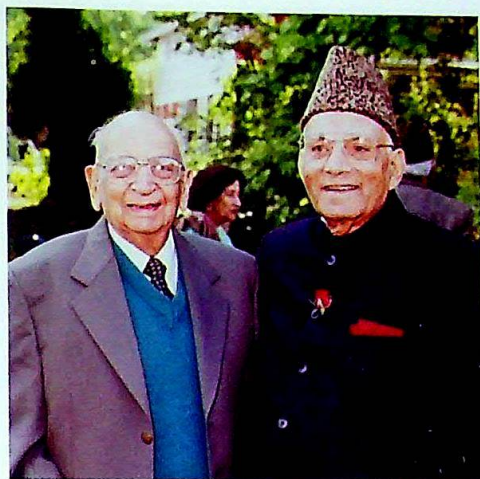


With Vinod and
Sarayu Doshi ▶

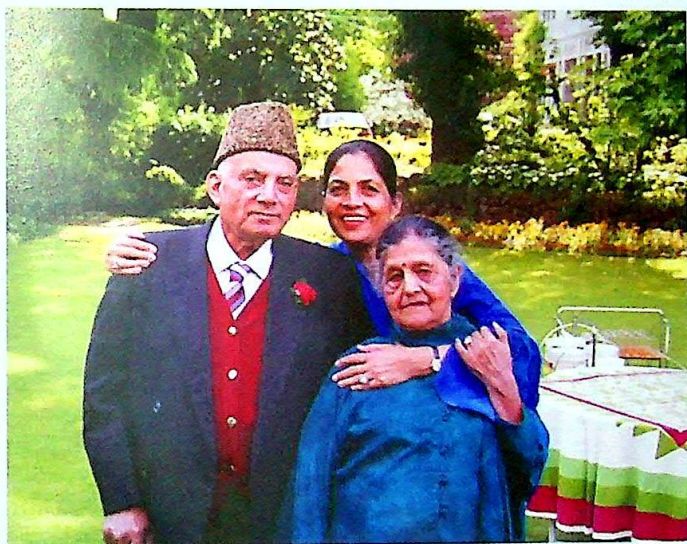




With old friends Mr. & Mrs. S R Dinodia



With Prem Soni

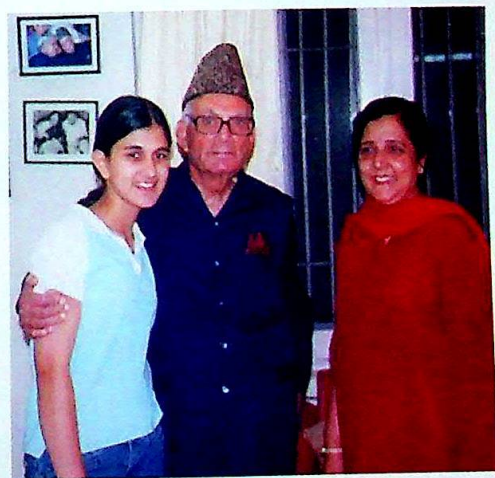


With Kiran

Arun Jain, Satya, Tirath & Vijay Lakshmi



*With great-grand daughter
Tarika Khattar & Sadhana Jain*





*In the train to Ajmer Sharif,
with Romila, Rama, Vijay
Lakshmi & Shaffu*



*Nigari Bhabhi, Vimla Luthra,
Tirath, Satya & Rani Bhabhi*

90th Birthday, Srinagar









HT City

90 Cheers For The Grand Old Man Of Kashmir

...the Grand Old Man of Kashmir, who celebrated his 90th birthday on Sunday. The celebration was held at the residence of the veteran Congressman, Tarek Ram Azhar. The occasion was marked by a gathering of family members, friends, and well-wishers. The Grand Old Man of Kashmir, who has been a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics for decades, was seen in good health and spirits. The celebration was a joyous occasion, with many guests wishing him a long and healthy life. The Grand Old Man of Kashmir, who has been a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics for decades, was seen in good health and spirits. The celebration was a joyous occasion, with many guests wishing him a long and healthy life.

THE DELHI AGE

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The Indian EXPRESS

For That Special Someone

Friends and family celebrated the 90th birthday of veteran Congressman Tarek Ram Azhar.

With a career spanning over four decades, Tarek Ram Azhar has been a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics. He has served the people of Kashmir with dedication and integrity. His 90th birthday was celebrated with great fanfare, as friends and family gathered to honor him. The celebration was a testament to his long and illustrious career. Tarek Ram Azhar, who has been a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics for decades, was seen in good health and spirits. The celebration was a joyous occasion, with many guests wishing him a long and healthy life.

Delhi Times

Ninety years young!

More than a century of service to the nation, Tarek Ram Azhar has been a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics. He has served the people of Kashmir with dedication and integrity. His 90th birthday was celebrated with great fanfare, as friends and family gathered to honor him. The celebration was a testament to his long and illustrious career. Tarek Ram Azhar, who has been a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics for decades, was seen in good health and spirits. The celebration was a joyous occasion, with many guests wishing him a long and healthy life.

1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7

Part - V

Messages & 90th Birthday Greetings

1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7

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Atal Bihari Vajpayee

MESSAGE

Lala Tirath Ram Amla is one of the finest parliamentarians of India. His 21 years in the Parliament have placed him firmly in the history as a person who took up a cause not because his party wanted it, but because of his convictions. He represented Jammu and Kashmir and was intricately connected with the events that shaped its history. He stood out as a fearless crusader for the rights of Kashmiris within the framework of Constitution. He refused to be tied down by any orthodox line of thinking and always looked for imaginative alternatives, even if it meant digressing from the official line of his Congress party.

Born in Muzaffarabad, Lalaji grew up with the values of compassion, equality and determination deeply ingrained in his personality. His penchant for taking up unconventional causes was manifest in many ways in his personal and public life. Against all odds, he not only married a deaf and dumb girl, but also learnt sign language to communicate with his wife for over six decades.

Lalaji is deeply involved with the affairs of Jammu and Kashmir. Mrs. Indira Gandhi appreciated his understanding of the Kashmiri political psyche. She demonstrated faith in Amlaji's honest opinion based on ground realities. Even on the floor of the house, Lalaji expressed his views in an objective, independent and fair manner. Never the one to go for rhetoric, Lalaji demonstrated rare conviction in his beliefs when he objectively made his point.

New Delhi 110011 India
Tel.: +91 11 23793877, 23015308 Fax: +91 11 23014773



Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Lala Tirath Ram Amla's proximity to Mrs Indira Gandhi helped him play a positive role in starting a dialogue between her and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah in 1975. With Mirza Afzal Beg and G. Parthasarthy successfully formulating a framework for an accord between Mrs Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah, the two sides agreed to a government headed by Sheikh Abdullah in Jammu and Kashmir. The events in the following decades once again brought Lala Tirath Ram in the forefront. When Farooq Abdullah started a campaign of vilification against Mrs Gandhi in 1983, Lalaji opened a front to oust him. Farooq Abdullah's government was dismissed in July 1984.

Lalaji opposed the dialogue between Rajiv Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah. He believed that Farooq couldn't be trusted, particularly in the backdrop of the still fresh dismissal of Farooq's government by Mrs Gandhi. Despite his opposition, the Rajiv-Farooq accord was inked and elections to the Jammu and Kashmir assembly were held in 1987. These elections were historic in the sense that they changed the course of Kashmir's polity. People felt cheated by the rigging and subsequent installation of a corrupt coalition government. Jammu and Kashmir entered a prolonged phase of insurgency. The opportunity was fully used by Pakistan, which sent scores of trained terrorists to unleash violence in the valley.

Shri Tirath Ram Amla deplored the ostrich like attitude of the government of India in dealing with the terrorists. He did not hesitate in going against his party when it came to defending the security of the people of Kashmir. The events of 1989 stand testimony to his fearless attitude. Militancy had started taking roots in the valley. Pakistan had started training terrorists, arming them



Atal Bihari Vajpayee

and helping them cross the line of control. I raised this issue in the Rajya Sabha in April 1989. The minister of state for home affairs Shri P. Chidambaram dismissed the apprehensions of the opposition. Shri Amla firmly disputed the version of home ministry. He clearly pointed out that Pakistan is sending trained terrorists. He claimed that the terrorists were forcing the closure of restaurants during the month of Ramzan. He openly stated that Hindu and Sikh families were facing a serious threat in the valley. Ultimately, the home ministry was forced to admit that the security forces had apprehended 75 infiltrators from across the border recently.

The same courage was demonstrated when Amlaji once again opposed the party line while upholding truth. On 16th August 1989, Shri Tirath Ram Amla told the Rajya Sabha that the extremists were holding the people of Kashmir valley to ransom. He fearlessly raised the issue of security and integrity of the nation, despite being a member of the ruling party. He could foresee the decades of violence and destruction in the valley. Had the government of the day heeded to his wise advice, the history of Kashmir might have been different.

Lalaji has seen healthy nine decades of an eventful life. His positive attitude, perfectionist approach and fearless mind place him in a class of his own. I wish him many more active years in the service of the nation.

New Delhi

December 3, 2004

Atal Bihari Vajpayee
(A.B. Vajpayee)

New Delhi 110011 India
Tel.: +91 11 23793877, 23015308 Fax: +91 11 23014773

ARUN NEHRU

Former Union Minister

ASRA

Chandanhula, Mehrauli
New - Delhi 110030
36808785/26808785

E-mail arunnehru@hotmail.com

My Dear Rohit,

30/3/2004

I am delighted to write a little about Tirath Ram ji whom I must admit I have treated more as a family member than a politician. I know nothing about his business prowess but anyone who has gone through two major episodes where you become refugees in your country and yet have the nerve to grow and prosper must have more than mere business acumen. We have been through a very turbulent time in Kashmir politics in the 1980's = for many of us managing things at the top it was just another 'state' but for those in the field and resident in the valley it took a great deal of courage = the Broadway hotel was our headquarters and I was quite amazed that Tirath ji showed little fear when confronted with a vindictive government.

I have off course a more personal reason to remember the Amla family. I have always recommended to all my friends that the 'ideal' place to get sick is in Dachigam and I still remember the day I took ill and had to be treated in Srinagar = Tirath ji's home became our home and ever since we have treated every member of the family as our own. I am not used to great emotions but I know and understand character when I see it = there are few words in which I can describe your grandfather as a businessmen or a politician as for me both of these are not important = I think of him as a good human being, loyal to his thinking, his friends and his family and I think if you reflect upon life and think deeply then the greatest gift which you have received from him is a lesson to conduct yourself with honor and commitment and think of the future generations in whatever you do.

My apologies for the delay but my life is one long story of fighting elections, making others fight or commenting about future elections.

With Regards



[Arun Nehru]



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अखिल भारतीय कांग्रेस कमेटी

अशोक गहलोत
 महासचिव

24 अक्टूबर रोड,
 नई दिल्ली-110011

15 फरवरी, 2005

प्रिय श्री रोहित जी,

हम सभी के लिए यह असीम प्रसन्नता का अवसर है कि श्री तीरथराम आम्ला अपने जीवन के 90 वर्ष पार कर चुके हैं। मैं उनके दीर्घायु जीवन की कामना करता हूँ।

श्री आम्ला से मेरा 25 वर्ष का निरंतर सम्पर्क है। सर्वप्रथम सन् 1980 में जब वे राज्यसभा के सदस्य थे, मुझे उनके साथ संसद की लोक लेखा समिति में कार्य करने का अवसर मिला था। अनेक बार देश के विभिन्न भागों में उनके साथ संसदीय समिति के दौरे पर जाने का अवसर मिला। समितियों में साथ-साथ यात्रा करने तथा कार्य करने के दौरान यह सम्पर्क निरंतर प्रगाढ़ होता ही चला गया तथा उन्हें और ज्यादा नजदीकी से जानने का अवसर मिला। उनकी कार्यशैली, व्यवहार एवं युवा पीढ़ी के प्रति अपार स्नेह ने मुझे बहुत ही प्रभावित किया।

देश और प्रदेश की समस्याओं के बारे में उनकी निरंतर चिंता अपने आप में अनुकरणीय थी। उनमें देशप्रेम की भावना कूट-कूट कर भरी हुई है।

वे मिलनसार, मृदुभाषी, व्यवहार कुशल व्यक्तित्व के धनी हैं। बिना किसी भेदभाव के वे सभी से सहयोग की भावना रखते हैं और उनका आदर करते हैं। इसी कारण कांग्रेस के अलावा अन्य राजनीतिक दलों में भी उनकी अच्छी प्रतिष्ठा एवं सम्मान बना रहा है।

मैं बहुमुखी प्रतिभा एवं कर्मठ व्यक्तित्व के धनी श्री तीरथराम जी आम्ला के दीर्घायु जीवन की पुनः कामना करता हूँ।

आपका,

(अशोक गहलोत)

श्री रोहित खट्टर
 ओल्ड वर्ल्ड होस्पिटेलिटी,
 इंडिया हैबीटेड सेंटर,
 लोदी रोड, नई दिल्ली

15 February 2005

Dear Rohit,

It is an extremely happy occasion for all of us that Shri Tirath Ram Amla has completed 90 years of his life. I wish for his long life.

I have known Mr. Amla for the last 25 years. I got a chance to work with him first in 1980 when he was a member of Rajya Sabha in the Parliament Public Accounts Committee. Many a times I got to travel to different parts of the country with him while we were working together in the Parliament Committee. During the time we travelled and worked together in committees, we came close and I got an opportunity to know him closely. I was very impressed with his working style, behaviour and his love for youth.

His continuing concerns about the problems of the country and state were worth emulating. He is patriotic to the core.

He is social, soft-spoken and has a practical personality. He is respectful and cooperative towards everybody without any discrimination. Due to this, he has maintained a positive image and commands respect not only in congress but other political parties as well.

I again wish for a long life for Shri Tirath Ram Ji Amla who has a versatile personality and has an unstinted devotion to cause.

With best wishes,

Yours,

Ashok Gehlot

Shri Rohit Khattar
Old World Hospitality
Habitat World at India Habitat Centre
Lodhi Road, New Delhi



A. A. Zargar

Srinagar Jammu
Ph. : (0) 2479005 (R) 2549690 -J

MINISTER FOR
AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION,
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND CO-OPERATIVE
JAMMU AND KASHMIR

D. O. No.

Dated :

MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH LALA TIRATH RAM AMILA JI

By Ab. Aziz Zargar

I feel pleasure to recollect my association with Lala Teerath Ram Amila Ji who remained Treasurer of J&K Pradesh Congress Committee for a long period and represented J&K State in Rajya Sabha repeatedly for a long period of 21 years starting from May 1967, thereafter in 1970, April 1976 and then again in 1985.

After the sad demise of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in Sixtees, I in the capacity as MLA Devsar and Tehsil President, PCCI used to attend the Executive Meetings of JK PCC under the Presidentship of Syed Mir Qasim Sahib and the stalwardship of Late G.M. Sadiq and other dignitaries, I came to develop my relationship as Party colleague with Lala Ji. I found him an upright businessman, philanthropist and shrewd politician who never compromised on principles and always raised his voice in the highest forum of the country on the issues of vital public importance as he was conscious of his obligation to the people of the State.

As a treasurer of the J&K PCC, Lala Ji made a valuable personal contribution to the working of the Congress party and he used to contribute positively during the discussions of PCC Executive Meetings on various important policy matters. Lala Ji had a very clean and secular outlook and now when he has crossed 90 years of his life, this multifaceted personality has kept alive these qualities of life. Of course, Lala Ji is a good human being, loyal to his ideals, affectionate and caring to his friends and associates.

I remember once during my half a century long political career, when I was fighting my 4th consecutive Assembly Election from Noorabad Constituency in South Kashmir, I suddenly received a cheque amounting to Rs: 5,000/- . Later I came to know it was sent by Lala Ji on the instructions of D.P. Dhar who was an efficient Minister during Late Bakshi Gh. Mohammad and Late G.M. Sadiq's memorable regime. This shows his generosity and concern for his



A. A. Zargar

Ph. : (O) . (R) 2549890
MINISTER FOR
AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION,
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND CO-OPERATIVE
JAMMU AND KASHMIR

D. O. No.

Dated :

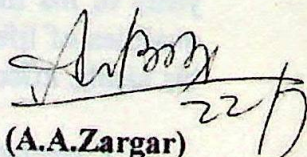
colleagues and associates. In fact, I was in need of some money at that time to carry on my electioneering.

I have seen Amila Ji a most simple man though being a leading business Icon of the State and has been bestowing moral and financial help to every needy.

In yet another instance of Lala Ji's hospitality, I remember in 1970 a group of MLA's from J&K lead by Syed Mir Qasim went to Delhi to meet Hon'ble Prime Minister Indira Ji and other colleagues like Late Y.B. Chouhan etc; against Chief Minister Late G.M.Sadiq. It was Lala Ji who arranged boarding and lodging facilities for all 35 MLAs and MLCs at his Broadway Hotel in Delhi for around a week and when we returned back to J&K State, he gave us a warm send off at Railway Station, Delhi and provided delicious dinner packs to each of us. Lala Ji had a very close proximity to the national leadership also and had first hand knowledge of the Public opinion on the problems of the State.

It is only yesterday, 21st of July 2004 when I was busy meeting people to solve their problems at my official residence, M-3 Tulsi Bagh, srinagar, Lala Ji suddenly entered the meeting hall and in the same straight forward life style with a smiling face met me and asked for some Krari's (indigenous milk product of Kashmir) of Shopian. I was delighted + to see him entering my room without any pre-information.

I pray to God for his good health and long life.


(A.A.Zargar)

A. L. Batra

CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR



OFFICE:
E-42/3, Okhla Industrial Area,
Phase-II, New Delhi-110020
Tel : 26383079, 26383134,
26383235, 26384771
Fax : 26385277
Email: albatra_group@vsnl.net

February 14, 2005

I have had the privilege of coming into contact with Lala Tirath Ramji Amla since 1955. During these 50 years I have received immense affection from him like a family member and he has been a great friend, philosopher and a source of inspiration. He has served the J & K State in various capacities and especially as a Member of Parliament. He forewarned the Government of the catastrophe that the J & K State was heading towards much before the trouble started in 1990. If the Government had acted upon in time we could have avoided the bloodshed and loss of innocent lives under which the State has been reeling during the last 15 years. In spite of his closeness to the seat of power, he has been an icon of simplicity and humility and commands great respect among all communities in J & K State for his and his family's commitment to J & K State. Even at the age of 92 today with the blessings of Almighty he is leading an active life and I pray for his long and healthy life. I wish him all the joys and the best of health and happiness for a long time to come so that he can continue to serve the State.

(A.L. Batra)

Residence: C 27/28, South Extension, Part II, New Delhi 110049, Tel: 26253850, 26252982, 26257878; Fax: 26255805

Arun K. Jain

4th March 2005.

Dear Papaji,

Like the great banyan, Papaji has extended his support, shelter and nurturance to all who have come to him through the years. He is one of those rare persons who extend his warmth and love to a large and wide circle of people. He embraced me and welcomed me into his home, his heart and his family even though I was the son-in-law of a close friend. It is from him that I learnt that relationships of the heart are more important or as valuable as relationships of the blood. His love and genuine concern for my family and me has been unconditional and unfettered. I admire and respect him for his sincerity and his patience to guide me as a concerned and loving patriarch.

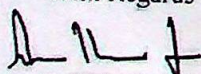
Papaji has been a friend and counsel for my entire family. My own father, Bimal Prasad Jain was especially close to him and they shared a rare friendship. Both were stalwarts of the business world, well respected by all. Their intense discussions of economic issues were a source of an invaluable education for me. In fact my father advised Papaji to make some wise and lucrative investments in real estate, which helped him in his life. This ability to share and help others selflessly is a quality I have learnt from their entire generation. After my father's death, I have found in Papaji the father figure to support me through the ups and downs of life. He is the person I have turned to for advice through every state in my life. I trust his counsel completely as I rely on him to be unbiased and realistic. His wealth of real life experiences gives him a perspective and vision that helps me to step back and view the bigger picture. Each time I have erred or fallen, he has given me the courage to rise and fight back. His own indefatigable spirit is a constant inspiration for me.

Papaji and his family had to leave Kashmir during terrorism with only **personal** possessions. At a late age he had to start all over again and establish himself and his family and build his business again. Any other man would have given in. It is his fighting spirit and optimistic outlook that has kept up the driving spirit of the entire family and in fact helped all those displaced from their native Kashmir. He has set the highest benchmarks for courage and persistence.

Papaji is my role model. He has set an example of living life to the fullest extent, of accepting and savoring each experience that life holds for us.

Truly great people usually don't feel important; they make others feel important.

With Regards



(ARUN JAIN)

DR. B. L. AMLA
Former Director, CFTRI, Mysore

426, Contour Road,
Gokulam, 3rd Stage,
Mysore - 570 002
☎ : (0821)410672

My Uncle – A Visionary

My recollections of my Uncle relate to his legendary courage, compassion, love and foresight. A few of these treasured memories are given here.

Our town, "Muzaffarabad", was set in the mountains and surrounded by forests filled with all kinds of wildlife including wild birds, boars, cheetahs and tigers. It was a fertile surroundings for good hunting. My uncle was considered an ace hunter. His hunting expeditions, full of courage and bravery, were told to us as young children which use to fill us with tremendous excitement and pride. I was once an eyewitness to one such episode in 1938 when a tiger wandered into our town and started attacking cattle and people. A few fatalities were reported every day and this caused panic in the town. The forest department felt something had to be done and called upon all hunters to join the hunt. They all felt that without the presence of my Uncle the attempt would be inadequate. Although Uncle was not well that day but he nevertheless rose to the occasion and agreed to lead the hunt. The tiger was spotted in a cave near the old fort on the outskirts of town. As the group marched through town, I was in the crowd which followed excitedly behind them. All the hunters found strategic spots to mount the attack. Uncle found a spot on a cliff, in front of the cave with the river raging below, and took aim and fired at the tiger. The wounded tiger charged out at Uncle, knocking him down several meters into the river below. There was a fist fight where my uncle overpowered the tiger with the assistance of the other hunters. When the tiger was finally killed, the crowd burst into applause. I ran home to break the news to everyone in the family. They were elated until news trickled in that Uncle was hurt in this incident. He came home walking but covered in bandages. However the recovery was very quick and within weeks he was back to normal. In those weeks, there was a stream of well wishers from the town enquiring about his health and expressing their gratitude for his bravery in demolishing this threat to their lives. This act of extreme courage and bravery made an everlasting impression in my mind and the minds of many other youngsters in the family.

As I got older, I saw a more compassionate and selfless side of my Uncle. He always came to the aid of family and friends when they needed it most. There was an european doctor working in the mission hospital in Srinagar who became a good friend of Uncle and many others. The doctor was diagnosed with a serious illness that could only be treated in Vellore Hospital near Madras in Tamil Nadu. In those days, travel to such a distant and fairly unknown place was long and arduous. Many others felt that the doctor's condition had deteriorated so much that a positive outcome was not possible. However my Uncle insisted that even if there was remote chance for a recovery it should be attempted. Uncle literally carried his friend to Vellore and only returned to Srinagar after the hospital assured him that they would look after the doctor well. After many months of treatment the doctor was brought back to Srinagar where he spent his last days peacefully in the company of his friends. Once again uncle was the driving force behind his care.

Uncle is a loving family man. I remember vividly the time when my aunt suddenly fell ill and was confined to bed for almost a year. My uncle, at times single handedly, provided

DR. B. L. AMLA
Former Director, CFTRI, Mysore

426, Contour Road,
Gokulam, 3rd Stage,
Mysore - 570 002
☎ : (0821) 2410672

the care and comfort that she needed the most. She made a remarkable recovery and I attribute this completely to my Uncle's deep love and commitment to the family. During this period I had the opportunity to spend a lot of quality time with both my uncle and my ailing aunt. I have been a recipient of their love and affection in the greatest measure. The upheaval in 1947 caused us to be displaced from our home town and my school education was severely disrupted. My uncle was a strong force in putting me back on track toward a university education and I joined the Benaras Hindu University to pursue a degree in science. Both my uncle and aunt have supported me at key points in my life. After my graduation from BHU when I expressed a desire to go to America for higher studies, uncle was the only one who supported the idea and convinced my father to accede. He helped me at every step in preparing for the journey. One of the most touching moments of my life was when I came to say goodbye to them before I set out on the journey. My aunt, who is the noblest soul in the family, has always been a tremendous source of strength to me especially after my mother and many others died in the 1947 incident. She insisted that I should be encouraged to seek higher education and told my uncle that I should be given "lots" of money to ensure that I would live comfortably abroad. My uncle jokingly asked her "what was a lot of money". My aunt, who never had the need to handle money in her life, paused for a while and then replied "10 rupees". My uncle and I smiled gently and were moved immensely by the deep concern displayed by her. The fact that both my aunt and uncle wanted me not to face any hardship in a strange land was a deeply touching moment for me. I am extremely proud to have always enjoyed the gift of deep love and affection of both of them.

Back in Muzaffarabad, we were a family of landowners, whole sale trading and money management. Uncle was the first person in the family to go to college and graduate with a B.A. degree. He became a role model for the younger generations in the family. He opened a pathway for us to pursue college education. He constantly encouraged us to set and pursue our goals in a single minded and determined way. He also motivated the family to look past the traditional trading practices and move on to more exciting and challenging business opportunity. He introduced them to ventures like forest leases, roads and building contracts. This exposure was key in initiating the family into developing innovative ways of business promotion. During the upheavals of 1947, the family faced with many personal tragedies was forced to leave their home and everything else they knew and loved. The family without resources moved to Srinagar, Jammu and other parts of India and looked forward to resettlement. It was in this difficult time that my Uncle, with true strength of conviction and concern, started many new ventures and guided the family to stand on their feet.

C.L. Sehgal,
309-A Gandhi Nagar
Jammu-Tawi.

My dear Rohit ji

You have very kindly desired me to write some of my memories about dearest CHACHA JI.

My heart is so much brimful with affection and reverence for him that I could not find proper word to express my reflections.

"Lala Sahib Tirth Ram Amla is known as Chacha Ji or Tirth Chacha out of affection and respect amongst his near and dear ones, whereas others call him Lala Ji or Lala Sahib.

The fragrance of his noble deeds such as his politeness, humanity, generosity, kindness, gallantry and valour in his character requires no comments. He demonstrated his heroism when he endangered his life to venture to kill a panther on a difficult slippery rock on the bank of a dangerous river. I think business was in his blood. Whatever business he ventured to take up he took it to peak of excellence may it be construction work, forest contract, transport, automobile or any other which he desired to accomplish.

His politeness and generosity is matchless. He treats every one with same affection and politeness without consideration of his or her status. He has been bestowing his moral and financial help to every youngman who could get a seat in professional colleges out of merit without their asking for it. To each and every needy person he is always there to help him without any recommendation or show of any favour. Once he got me allotted a plot out of Chief Minister's quota without my knowledge and I was at a loss to know as to how it has happened when I had never requested to any one for this favour. Long after I came to know of his kindness when he only inquired from me if I have got a plot. In this connection I am remind of a great poet and generous man "Raskhan" He would give his offerings to the people looking downward. Some one inquired from him about his this habit. His reply was that he feel ashamed as people think that I am offering whereas some one above me is doing it. I am only his instrument.

C.L. Sehgal,
309-A Gandhi Nagar
Jammu-Tawi.

The parliament membership is a boon for him from his political fans whom he had been helping financially and otherwise out of his own free will when they happen to be out of power or in distress. In this connection I may say he unlike other people he never bow to the rising Sun but he always pay his offerings to the setting Sun and this has been the real secret of his success in life. He is in know of the reality that the setting Sun will be the rising Sun the next day.

He is a straight forward person so he has no interest to indulge in political maneuvers. He feels politics has been thrust upon him. This, he has written in a letter to one of his best friend Raja Hamid Khan Sahib, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, which they call Azad Kashmir. This letter he sent to him through me when I went to Muzaffarabad with my wife to show her a glompse of my native place in 1989.

He has been never after name or fame rather the name and fame had been after him without his desire for these. Once I approached him in presence of Lala Bhim Sain Soi Ji with the request that I want to write his biography. Lala Bhim Sain also very strongly supported my request but he did not obliged me as he was not in a mood to high light his achievements. I do not know much about his business talents or his role as parliamentarian but I know very much about his humane personal qualities which I have not been able to find in any other person so far. He always address me with affection "CHARAN" in the same way as my deceased mother use to call me. There is sea of these reflections in my memories but I do not know how much space I can get in your souvenir.

Dear Rohit Ji my feeling is that the great man has agreed to write his biography only out of his immense affection for his great grandson.

With best wishes & regards

Yours own

Shri Rohit Khattar,
Managing Director,
Old World Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.
Habitat World at India Habitat.

C.L. Sehgal
(Charanjit Lal)

D. D. Thakur
Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of India
Former Governor of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh
Former Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir
Former Deputy Chief Minister, Jammu & Kashmir

"Moti House"
A-160, New Friends Colony
New Delhi-110065, INDIA
Tel: 6838718, 6315844, Fax: 6311514

TIRATH RAM AMLA

I have seen people who have risen to plateau of power and possibility and stayed there for a while. They wielded thunderbolt of authority from that elevated plateau which inspired awe and consternation. They command obedience for so long as they remain possessed of power. Such people have been mistakenly described as great. Their greatness vanished when they parted company with the position they held. This proves that the respect and honour was attached to the exalted position and not to the occupier of that position. By this mistaken understanding of greatness there has been proliferation of people, famous and great, even when that fame and greatness did not last beyond a few days.

Greatness I believe, flows from within and not from without. It's origin lies in great thinking. Its seeds must sprout and blossom into honesty, integrity compassion truth, sacrifice, sincerity and so on. These are the qualities which confer a colour of greatness on a person and mark him out for distinction.

D. D. Thakur
Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of India
Former Governor of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh
Former Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir
Former Deputy Chief Minister, Jammu & Kashmir

"Moti House"
A-160, New Friends Colony
New Delhi-110065, INDIA
Tel: 6838718, 6315844, Fax: 6311514

Rarely if ever I have come across a person who satisfies the attributes of greatness in a greater measure than Shri Tirath Ram Amla.

It was in early sixties when I used to shuttle between Jammu and Srinagar in connection with my law practice that I started hearing about Mr. Amla – Even the people who had nothing to do with him had a good word for him. I used to hear that Amla is a wealthy man. The statement was however a qualified one – it was his kindness which made him wealthy and that his wealth added to his kindness and compassion for others.

Ordinarily enormous wealth in the hands of an individual has been described by philosophers as highly perilous for the society, if it is not accompanied by an equally enormous generosity, kindness and compassion. Amla had them all rolled in one in an abundant measure.

D. D. Thakur

Senior Advocate

Supreme Court of India

Former Governor of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh

Former Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir

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"Moti House"

A-160, New Friends Colony

New Delhi-110065, INDIA

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Because of his reputation as a good constituent of the society I had an instinctive desire to meet him but did not have an opportunity to do so for a long time.

Some time in the early seventies I drove to Srinagar with Capt. Dewan Singh who was a good friend of Mr. Amla. During our journey he told me that he shall have to be dropped at the house of Mr. Amla since he had to stay with him. This provided me an occasion to enquire from Mr. Diwan Singh about Mr. Amla's origin and his rise to prominence. Capt. Diwan Singh told me that after passing his graduation Mr. Amla had secured an employment in the forest department which carried a small salary. He also told me that he had married a girl who was deaf and dumb. These two facts created a deep impression about his approach to life and his courage and industry. This enhanced my curiosity about him. We reached Srinagar by about mid night and I dropped Capt. Diwan Singh in Mr. Amla's compound but before Mr. Amla could come out to receive him I left for Badshah Hotel where I used to stay. My desire to meet him did not fructify.

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Senior Advocate

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"Moti House"

A-160, New Friends Colony

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Tel: 6838718, 6315844, Fax: 6311514

Years rolled by I was appointed Judge of the High Court in March 1973. It was some time in January 1975 when I was invited by Sardar Rangil Singh to attend the wedding of his son. Rangil Singh was a minister in the state cabinet at that time. A large number of other guests were also present on that occasion. It was there when I noticed a bespectacled man in his sixties with silvery hairs gracefully dressed heading towards me. Introducing himself to me he said " I am Tirath Ram Amla. I would like to meet you tomorrow sometime if it is convenient to you." I told him that he could come around ten O'clock the next morning.

Punctually at 10.00 AM he came and was made to sit in my drawing room and I joined him a little later. There he told me that he had been deputed by Sheikh Mohd. Abdulla to convey his request to me that I should resign from the Judgeship of the High Court and join his cabinet. He told me the entire story about an accord having taken place between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Sahib. He shared with me that it was he who had pleaded for a dialogue between the two. After he spoke to Mrs. Gandhi to whom he was very close and got her

D. D. Thakur
Senior Advocate
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A-160, New Friends Colony
New Delhi-110065, INDIA
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nod he approached the Sheikh for agreeing to a dialogue with the Central Government. After some more meetings with both of them process was initiated and the two leaders nominated their representatives. Sheikh Sahib nominated his life long companion Mirza Afzal Beg and Mrs. Gandhi appointed Mr. G. Parthasarthy as her nominee. Amla told me that the accord envisages the appointment of Sheikh Sahib as Chief Minister with full discretion to appoint a cabinet of his choice from within or without the congress legislature party. It was in this context that the Sheikh wanted me to be a member of his cabinet. I declined to accept the offer and told him that I had a settled career of more than twenty years so it would not be advisable for me to give up the job and opt for an uncertain career in politics. He insisted that I should speak to Sheikh Sahib on telephone and connected me to him on his Delhi number. Sheikh Sahib ultimately persuaded me to respect his wishes and I joined his cabinet. I admire Mr. Amla for having anticipated the course of events, in case Sheikh Sahib was not brought to the main stream during his life time.

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Tel: 6838718, 6315844, Fax: 6311514

The tensions were created in the valley during the elections of June 1983 when a campaign of vilification was started by Farooq Abdullah against Mrs. Gandhi, the forces of fundamentalisms were sought to be promoted by joining hands with Moulvi Farooq, increasing anti national activities of Sikh terrorists, stray incidents of violence in the valley had prompted Mr. Amla to foresee the course of Kashmir history in the near future. It was he who started campaign for the ouster of Farooq Abdullah which campaign culminated in Farooq's dismissal on 2nd of July, 1984. Credit goes to Mr. Amla for a prophetic vision to forecast the political weather in the state and to make every possible effort by effectively dealing with the approaching political cyclone.

During the month of May and June undeterred by the repressive regime of Farooq Abdulla Mr. Amla offered his own residence at Sonwar Bagh and 'Broadway' his Five star Hotel for carrying on political activities for the ouster of Farooq Abdullah. On the night of 2nd of July 1984 it was his house which was converted into a hideout for the thirteen MLAs, all of whom were to

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Tel: 6838718, 6315844, Fax: 6311514

become the ministers in the state cabinet the following day. His son Krishan and his two grand son's Arjun & Amit had kept awake the whole night looking after the MLA's and providing them comforts. Mr. Amla was in 'United States' at that time.

It was an irony of fate that the man who was partly responsible for the installation of Sheikh Sahib as the Chief Minister of State on 25th of February 1975 was substantially responsible for the downfall of his son.

His contribution for the welfare of the people of the state did not end here. He was perhaps the only man in the state congress who was opposed to the Rajiv Gandhi Farooq Abdulla accord of 1986. He had pleaded that trusting Farooq soon after his dismissal by Rajiv's mother could be a serious contradiction on the part of the central Government. Alliance between two parties would reduce, according to him, a premier national party to the level of a regional political party in the State, whereas the National Conference would lose its character of a regional Chauvinist which hitherto had served as a buffer between the separatists and the

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Centre. The alliance, he believed, would result in bufferless conflict between the separatists and the Centre. At the same time the National Conference with an unreliable person like Farooq Abdulla as its head would get a license to let loose a reign of terror and take the state to hell in a hand cart.

The massive rigging in the elections of 1987 and subsequent installation of a corrupt coalition Government totally disillusioned the masses in Kashmir, the seeds of discontent which were sown during their regime culminated in the blood bath which the state has witnessed during the past decade and a half. Amla's vision and his far sight for what he did and what he thought should in fact instinctively invoke admiration for him.

In 1989 when militancy had started taking roots in the valley, in his historic speech in the Rajya Sabha he strongly warned the Government of the impending calamity in the State. It goes to his credit that he had the courage to stand up and tell the House that what Minister of State for Home Affairs had said in reply to

D. D. Thakur
Senior Advocate
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the question asked by Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, then the leader of the opposition was not factually correct. This had created history since even when Amla had been elected to the Rajya Sabha on Congress mandate he had the courage to falsify the stand taken up by the Minister of the Congress Government.

By doing what he did he went by the beats of his conscience he gave vent to his feelings and his judgement, undeterred by the discipline of the party. He so clearly exhibited his laudable character by ignoring the interest of his party at the alter of the interests of the nation. Times of India in its issue dated April 27, 1989 described the incident as follows :

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI, April 27.

A CONGRESS M.P., Mr. Tirath Ram Amla, surprised the Rajya Sabha towards the end of question hour today when he disputed the version of the situation in Kashmir presented to the House by

Resi: Jammu-Moti lodge, Karan Nagar, Tel.: 2542311, 2579664,
Batote-High Trees Home, Moti Bagh. Tel.: 244455.

D. D. Thakur
Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of India
Former Governor of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh
Former Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir
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the minister of state for home affairs, Mr. P. Chidambaram.

Mr. Chidambaram, however, said Mr. Amla was painting an "alarmist picture" and that it was wrong to generalize from a few incidents that all Hindus and Sikhs in Kashmir were being threatened by subversive elements. Mr. Amla claimed that some elements were forcing the closure of restaurants and eating places during the month of Ramzan. He claimed that if the incidents of disruption in the state had come down it was because the terrorists had decided to call a halt to their activities because of Ramzan. They would strike again after the Id-ul Fitr.

So agitated was Mr. Chidambaram with Mr. Amla's intervention that he walked up to him after question hour and was seen making some points to him emphasizing whatever he was saying by waving his finger at him. Before walking up to Mr. Amla, Mr. Chidambaram was also seen talking in an agitated manner to his colleague in the ministry, Mr. Santosh

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**Mohan Dev and the minister of state for
parliamentary affairs Mr. M. M. Jacob. "**

**Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who had asked the
question about infiltration of foreign-trained
terrorists into Kashmir, was not satisfied with the
minister's written answer which only talked of
"subversive" element indulging in violent activities
in the state. On being pressed to answer specifically
whether any of these elements had crossed over from
the border, Mr. Chidambaram revealed that 75
infiltrators from across the border had been
apprehended recently by the security forces. They
were not armed, he said."**

On 16.8.1989 the echos of the proceedings of 26.1.89
were clearly audible. Mr. Amla in his speech on the
day inter-alia said as follows :

**I also want to say one thing here now. One of my
senior colleagues said here that I said something
during the last session and I was made to apologise
for that. There is nothing like that. Of course, in my**

Resi: Jammu-Moti lodge, Karan Nagar, Tel.: 2542311, 2579664,
Batote-High Trees Home, Moti Bagh. Tel.: 244455.

D. D. Thakur
Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of India
Former Governor of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh
Former Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir
Former Deputy Chief Minister, Jammu & Kashmir

"Moti House"
A-160, New Friends Colony
New Delhi-110065, INDIA
Tel: 6838718, 6315844, Fax: 6311514

observations I had said that the extremists, the atankwadies, were holding the Valley to ransom and that their writ was running there and that their writ was being observed. I think, on the point, a member of the ruling party then in this House objected to it and said, "No we are very much in control of it. What you say is exaggerated". But subsequent events have proved that what I said on that day, to which my friends and my senior colleagues objected to was correct. Since then, all the calls for bandhs, all the commands of the extremists, are being observed very accurately, I would say, by most of the people in the Valley.

The fact that he relentlessly raised his voice in the highest forum of the Country on an issue vitally affecting the integrity of the Country long before the Government of India could realise its gravity despite the assistance of all intelligence agencies is a matter which must lead us to the view that Amla was not the man to simply press the button in the event of a division but one who was conscious of his obligations to the people

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of the state whom he represented to the best of his capability.

What is great about a politician is not his reaching the Parliament but his conscientious performance, undeterred by any other mundane consideration.

The circumstance which took him meteorically to the inner circle of Mrs. Indira Gandhi are also not difficult to discover. She was impressed by his performance during the first few days in the House. He was then asked to see her. It was there after that she trusted him for his sound and sincere advice which lead to his repeated election to the House for a total period of 21 years.

Ever since I first met him in 1975 I have had a ring side view of the man. I always found him a man of great benevolence and munificence who was always willing to help every one who sought his help. His sweet temper endeared him to one and all - politicians and others alike. Those out of office depended on him more

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than those in office. Tirath Ram Satya Devi Charitable Trust set up by him has become an effective instrument for helping the poor and needy with a corpus of crores of rupees.

The fact that he volunteered to marry a deaf & dumb girl reflects his attitude to life. He always looked for inner reality rather than any other consideration. I can say with certainty that providence always smiled at him. They say old soldiers donot die but fade away. Grand old men die but they never fade away. Amla even on his 90th birth day shines like a meteor in the sky with a serene mind and a smiling face, with no frown on his forehead he betrays no sign of ageing, no symptoms of gnawing anxiety of what lies a head. He is meticulous assiduous and totally committed to higher values of life. I am sure he will never fade away.

The fact that Atal Behari Vajpayee the Prime Minister and quite a few of his cabinet colleague with a large crowd of eminent people including I.K. Gujral came to greet him on his 90th birth day is an ample proof of his being a live wire even today. He may have given up the

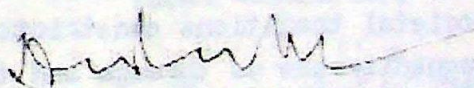
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mundane pursuits of life but his interest in spiritualism is ever increasing – one can say that he has penetrated into the hinterland of the spiritual man.

I am happy that he is celebrating his 90th Birthday. I am sure with his positive attitude to life he will live long to guide the family, friends like me and others.

I have nearly reached the end of life's journey because of my heart ailments and renal failure. I have not to go much further. I wish him many happy returns of the day to which I may not be a living witness.



D. D. THAKUR

DHARAMBIR SINGH JOLLY

M.A.,PH.D.

MANAGING DIRECTOR :

New Suraj Transport Co. Private Ltd.,

New Suraj Auto Repairs Private Ltd.,

CHAIRMAN

S.B. Sapuran Singh Chawla & Sons Private Ltd.,

Residence :-

6, Rani Ka Bagh

AMRITSAR.

DATED 4-3-2005

My dear Anla Ji,

I am sending you my humble views above you which correctly depict your personality as under:-

If a true friend is God's gift, I consider myself His favourite, for, about six decades ago, God bestowed this gift on me in the form of Tirath Ram Anla. Friendship with him has shaped and enriched my life in no small measure. Even today I vividly remember his cheerful temperament, sparkling wit and laughter which echo his love for life. Despite his elevated stature and enviable business contacts, Tirath Ram Anla is full of humility and true affection for all.

I really feel indebted to him for the timely help and solace that he has always extended towards me with open arms as wide as the Pir Panjal range. Way back in 1958 when my beloved daughter Kanwal decided to marry Veer (then an IPS Officer who eventually rose to a position of great eminence) and at that time family & societal traditions constricted me - Tirath Ram Anla - magnanimity saw us through and the marriage was solemnised in simple style.

A devoted husband, a loving father and above all - an excellent human being - these heavenly qualities endear Tirath Ram Anla to the young and the old alike.

Contd. Page No.2.

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AMRITSAR.

DATED 4-3-2005.

Belonging to the picturesque J&K - my dear friend is an ardent admirer of nature - the verdant forests rivers, valleys and hills are next to his heart and no man can ever love this heavenly part of the world more dearly than him.

Going down the memory lane, I would like to share a secret - the limitless love and reverence that Tirath Ram Amla and his wife have for each other and for their family. His age not withstanding, my friend has retained the same youthful vigour, zeal & zest for life. Its for people like him that (Malika Pukhraj) - the jewel of Jammu, - sang in her ageless voice 'Abhi To Main Jawan Hun'.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dharambir Singh Jolly
(DHARAMBIR SINGH JOLLY).

Sh. Tirath Ram Amla,
Broadway Hotel,
Asaf Ali Road,
NEW DELHI.
-.-.-.-.-

D. V. BATRA

CHAIRMAN
BATRA GROUP OF COMPANIES
39, COMMUNITY CENTRE,
ZAMRUDPUR, KAILASH COLONY,
NEW DELHI-110 048
TEL : 2644 7504, 2644 7509, 2644 7510, 2644 7512
FAX : 91-11-2646 0588

February 25, 2005

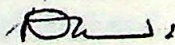
I have great pleasure to pen down my impressions and feelings about Respected Lala Tirath Ram Amala Ji. I came into contact with him in 1950 in Srinagar and always respected him as our elder family member.

He commands great respect and deep admiration from everybody who comes into contact with him. In him I have found a great friend, guide, philosopher and mentor and his contribution and commitment to social and political cause is immense and laudable. He has served the country in general and the State of Jammu and Kashmir in particular in various capacities, including his becoming Hon'ble Member of Rajya Sabha for three terms continuously, wherein he effectively espoused/voiced the cause of the State in a very efficient, forceful and satisfactory manner.

Even at this old age of 92 years, he is brisk with activity and I am sure that with the Almighty's blessings, he will continue to guide and serve the cause of the people at all levels.

In spite of his being a successful businessman, he is leading a very austere life and exhibits humbleness.

May God grant him long and healthy life to serve the State of Jammu & Kashmir which has already earned him repute in the hearts of the people of the State & also for the country as a whole.


(D.V.Batra)

FAQIR CHAND AMLA
C-137, East of Kailash
New Delhi-110048

March 5, 2005

Our Dearest Uncle Shri Tirath Ram Amla ji is a man of Great qualities. He helped all his relatives and friends whoever came to him for help in one way or the other.

He also has created a Trust in the name of
" TIRATH RAM SATYA DEVI CHARITABLE TRUST ".

Ours was a large joint family in Muzaffarabad town now in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir which got displaced and disintegrated during the upheaval of 1947. The whole family suffered heavy loss of life and property during 1947 raids, fortunately our respected Uncle Shri Tirath Ram Amla ji happened to be in Srinagar in connection with the business at the time of this upheaval of 1947 which perhaps was a blessing in disguise as it helped our family to reunite and was a pillar of strength for everybody.

The remaining members of joint family alongwith the rest of the Hindu families were evacuated by the Red Cross Society and handed over to the Indian Government at Wagah border from where we were all taken to Kurukhetra refugee Camp, from Kurukshetra Camp some members of our family went to Jammu and Yol Camp & Chunar Camp in Mirzapur district of U.P.

I myself alongwith my respected father Shri Bishan Dass Amla and brother Mr. Jagan Nath Amla and Mr. Tilak Raj Amla went to Almora, where I got a job in U.P. Government Civil Supplies Department. Our Respected father started his wholesale trade in Almora along with Mr. Jagan Nath Amla with financial help from our Respected Uncle Shri Tirath Ram ji.

In the meantime Respected Uncle got some forest on Government Lease and called all of us to Srinagar to join him in his Forest Lease Business. Respected Uncle Tirath Ram ji also called other relatives from Camp to join in his forest Lease and transport business. He helped all his nephews in getting admission in different Colleges & Schools in India and thus tried to unite the family which had got displaced during the upheaval of 1947.

He even went out of the way to help his Muslim friend Abdul Hamid Khan to cross the L.O.C. Border way back in 1947 with the help of Army Authority to unite him with his family to reach his home town Muzaffarabad, which show his secular Character.

He had association with persons of high position and was respected by everyone. His influence even worked in P.O.K. in those days.

FAQIR CHAND AMLA
C-137, East of Kailash
New Delhi-110048

One day it so happened that while we were in Muzzafarabad town of P.O.K. during the upheaval of 1947. We heard that a tribal soldier had been killed in our nearby area, while the tribal soldiers were searching for the killer in our neighbourhood, they caught hold of my Cousin Shri Krishan Lal Amla, as according to their statement he resembled the killer and took him to their Camp for interrogation. I followed them to the Camp to plead on his behalf as he was innocent. At that time one "Khan Garhi" was incharge of the Camp who happened to be good acquaintance of our uncle Tirath Ram ji, as we were narrating the whole story to " KHAN GARHI ", to our surprise he asked us if we were related to Shri Tirath Ram Amla, after knowing that we were related, he immediately ordered the release of my Cousin.

Thus was the respect he carried.

Uncle Shri Tirath Ram Amla ji is very pioneering, courageous and intelligent.

A learned, good conversationalist, harmonious, sympathetic and respected by everyone.

FAQIR CHAND AMLA



Jammu & Kashmir Awami National Conference

جموں و کشمیر عوامی نیشنل کانفرنس

جی۔ ایم۔ شاہ

G.M. SHAH

President

My Dear Rohit

Your Grandfather & my close friend Lalla Tirath Ram Jee Amala^{and I} have been friends since 1945. I returned from Aligarh in the last month of 1944. I had been a worker of N.C in my student days. I joined N.C. on my return, and became Halka President of Chatabal. My friend Mr. G.M. Bhat introduced me to Lalla Ji who used to come to Mujahid Manzil off and on to meet Sheri Kashmir & Mirza Afzal Beigh.

Lalla Jee & Myself became fast friends because we were believers in secularism, Democracy & Nationalism. Lalla Jee was in Congress & I in N.C. Happily our political beliefs were same and so. N.C. & Congress worked hand in hand together in Political field of the State. Lalla Jee believed fully in Democracy & abolition of Dogra Raj & he contributed much for achieving this end.

I used to visit him off and on at his residence or some times with Bhat Sahib at Broadway Hotel. In Dehli I used to go often at his Sundar Nagar residence and discuss matters connected with removal of Dogra Raj.

In Dehli with his close association I met a good number of Congress & other Leaders like Morarji Desai, Indra Jee etc.

After Sheikh Sahibs death some Assembly members of N.C. met me and urged me to change N.C. Govt. Lalla Jee came to my help and he arranged Congress support. I formed the Govt. and I used to consult Lalla Jee about different matters of the State. My Govt. lasted only for 22 months. I was dismissed on the advice of the then Governor of State Jagmohan. He also took away my party office Building near Polo Ground.

Here I found Lalla Jee a friend in need is a friend indeed. He at once gave me his whole building at Misuma without any Rent. After some years he told me that he is in need of this building. I on the same day vacated the premises as he desired, because I was the trusty of his Building.

It is now since a few years that we have not met because I remained confined mostly to Kashmir.



Jammu & Kashmir Awami National Conference

جموں و کشمیر عوامی نیشنل کانفرنس

G.M. SHAH
President

جی۔ ایم۔ شاہ
صدر

Lalla is a great Patriot, a noble Politician, a gentleman at heart, generous & par excellence humanitarian.

My Prayers are that he may live long to be a solace to all of us. May he live long. That is my every day Prayer.

With love to you and all family members and best wishes.

Affectionally Your's

10 Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar (Kashmir) Phone (0194)-452516, 470350 Fax 475080
23-A Gandhi Nagar Jammu (Tawi) 180001 Telefax 0191-458567

Dr. G. Q. Allaqaband

M. R. C. P. (LONDON) F. R. C. P. (EDIN) F. I. C. C.

BALGARDEN, SRINAGAR - 190010

e-mail: gqallaqaband@hotmail.com

Tel. : 2474532 (Clinic)

CONSULTING HOURS :

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3.30 P.M. To 5.30 P.M.

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SUNDAY CLOSED

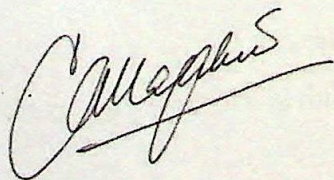
CONSULTATION BY PREVIOUS
APPOINTMENT ONLY

Dated..... 15th March 2005

Mr. Tirath Ram Amla, popularly known as LALA JI, has multidimensional personality, who has been a prominent figure in the business, social and political circles of the state of JAMMU & KASHMIR for over a half century. His vast circle of his friends has always held him in high esteem, because of his humble nature, honesty of purpose and helpful attitude. His popularity can be judged from the galaxy of people from all walks of life and political circles who attended his birthday party on his last birthday, the gathering was practically WHO IS WHO in India.

I have had the privilege of knowing LALA JI for over last 30 years, both as an esteemed friend and as a patient. I have seen him from close quarters taking keen interest in the welfare of his friends, colleagues and last but not least in his staff working under him. This truly makes him a very noble soul and a good human being par excellane. He has helped lot of people to achieve status in the society and even in becoming political heavy weights. This all he has done by dint of his wisdom, vast social and political connections.

He is remarkable for his readiness, his intuition and wit for his age. Some people live on encouragement others on their social or political connections; LALA JI seems to have overcome every disadvantage in his life with courage, grace and lot of self respect.



G.R. KAR

Dear Rohit,

It is being a great pleasure to write about one of my esteemed friend, Lala Tirath Ram, whom everybody calls "Chachajee". He had always been very generous and kind hearted gentle man.

He was the Congress M.P. for more than two decades and close associate of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Mohd. Afzal Beig Sahib, D.P. Dhar Sahib, G.L. Dogra Sahib and Sadiq Sahib. It was Chacha jee whose advices and opinions were valued in political circles within and outside Kashmir.

Chacha jee had been an sympathizer of National Conference. But after the division of N.C., he joined the Democratic National Conference and played a great role in its development.

Chacha jee always cared and has been the well wisher of his friends. He always tried to stay in touch with them even if they were away from him. Not only that he had a concern for party workers and helped them as and when possible.

It is great having friend, guide and advisor like Chacha jee, who always had been there at our support when we needed him.

I pray to God that he should get best of life.

With warm regards,

Sd/-

(G. R. KAR)

دوستی جیسے مقدس رشتے کو جاننا اور اسے
حتی الامکان بڑی خوبصورتی سے نبھانا
ایک عظیم سُنہ ہے۔ اس عظیم وصف کے واہر
میرے عزیز ترین دوست تیرتھ رام املہ ہیں۔
اللہ کرے کہ ہر شخص کو ایسا ہی ایک دوست
نصیب ہو۔ آمین
غلام رسول سائمن

English translation

Understanding the true relationship called friendship and fulfilling it with honesty is a matter of great eminence / renown.

My dearest friend Tirath Ram Amla has this great virtue. / My dearest friend Tirath Ram Amla is owner of this great virtue.

May God provide one such friend to every human being. / May God bless every human being with such a friend.

Amen

- Gulam Rasool Simon

H. L. MAINI

Retd. Chief Engineer, PWD
and Former Member
J & K Public Service Commission

35 D/C Gandhi Nagar,
Jammu (J&K) 180004
Tele : 0191-430861, 430872

Dated .. 24 . 02 . 2005

I came in contact with respected Tirath Uncle at the age of 29 years and since then my life stands changed tremendously and became better . In him I and my wife Shashi have found a fatherly figure. His protection, his guidance, his love and affection have made our life so much secure and meaningful. He is a man with extraordinary qualities , a self made sensitive to situation, concerned for poor, always available to others in need with total commitment to relationships. His hard work and honest approach has earned him respect from all sections of society . I must say that he is a kind man with goldern heart .


H. L. MAINI

MY TRIBUTE TO MR. TIRATH RAM AMLA

On the 21st of April, 2003, the Prime Minister, the Dy. Prime Minister & other Ministers of the Cabinet, Shri I.K. Gujral the Former Prime Minister and other dignitaries came over to extend their greetings to Mr. Tirath Ram Amla, (whom most of the people respectfully and affectionately address as Lalaji), on his 90th Birthday, a rainbow of many events flashed across my mind while I sat in the IHC Auditorium that I should write something on his life and times, I tried to evade the issue with the plea that I was relatively much younger in the hierarchy of his friends and admirers who would be contributing to such an important work which will be by association describing the last half – century of Kashmir's socio-political history as well. He said that the fact that I am neither his "friend" nor a contemporary, makes the very reason for writing something which will be based on my interaction with him as a professional.

I had heard a lot about Lalaji from friends and others but my direct interaction with him started when started working as a Cardiologist at Government Medical/SMHS Hospital, Srinagar-Kashmir in 80's. There were many events, which gave me an insight into this great man's grace and graciousness. Everybody there knew and talked of his very close

proximity to the national leadership and also that in any major shift in Kashmir policy, New Delhi invariably took his opinion and advice. It was also known that many people consulted him in most of the important matters. In background of this reputation, I met him first time on his invitation to his house extended through a very dear friend, I was surprised by his warmth, affection and down-to-earth profile. Many men in such position are too full of themselves with bursting egos and abrasive arrogance. I found Lalaji simple and straight; no frills, no fancies, no furs. He had a charming earthiness about which you read in Tagore's writings.

One event, I recollect is when he called me one morning saying that Mrs. D.P. Dhar was not well and if I would please see her. His concern and expression of responsibility bore the ring of extreme courtesy and urgency. Mrs. Dhar was admitted and I would see Lalaji *sitting outside the CCU on a wooden bench* like all other patients' attendants. He stayed there all the time, as if on duty till her son came back from Mexico. Such adherence to a social responsibility is rarely seen in today's very selfish world.

His first and only visit to my place took place one morning. This visit was unannounced. He looked extremely anxious and on an edge. He said, "Please come with me, Krishan is not well". I was surprised

me on telephone. In the background of his mind he might have thought that I might avoid making house call. Thus, he had come like any father would. On the way, he was quiet, lost in his worries. Later he looked so much relieved and a different person altogether when he was seeing me off after I announced that everything was okay. That day, I felt the impact of the intensity of love a father has for his son. I thought to myself that *a father's love is possibly a more serious an affair than the much hyped and much written about 'Mamta' of a mother.*

Over the years my interaction with Lalaji increased. There are many memorable occasions but the following one reflects his strength as a motivator.....

I was woken around 4 a.m. one night by his phone call saying "Out guest in Dachigam is having chest pain". I was groggy with sleep as I had gone to bed at around 2 O'clock after doing an emergency pace-maker. Lalaji's this sentence fully woke me up as I knew the VIP from Delhi was staying at Dachigam, Kashmir's most famous resort. I said, "Please rush him to hospital, I am reaching there". He said "Krishan is already on his way to fetch you and you will have to please go to Dachigam, to take the decision of hospitalisation because if this chest pain is just nothing it will get unnecessarily published. There was a point

in that. On reaching Dachigam I found that the visitor was having a full-fledged heart attack with an added complication but he was wanting to stay in the guest house itself. I insisted that he be transferred to the hospital immediately. Meanwhile, a lot of others from different departments had gathered there including the usual yes-men who were agreeing to convert the guest house into a CCU. *It was clear that things were heading towards a doom.* I conveyed this to Shree Jagmohan, the then Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, who fully agreed with me but the VIP was very reluctant to go to the hospital. I took Lalaji to one side in a separate room. *I vividly remember the dark background of the wall against which we were standing.* I used my ultimate argument. I said, "Lalaji, please tell the honourable guest and everybody else that I am going back and they can choose another cardiologist as I am not party to this wrong decision". He heard it quietly, gazed at my face for a split-second and then walked to the patient, who agreed within a minute to be hospitalised. I don't know what Lalaji told him, but one thing I know is that the *two-three sentences he had spoken, must have had the tone, tenor and the select-words convincing enough to motivate many million men!*

Mr. Tirath Ram Amla is a unique man with multi-dimensional personality..... It is difficult to fathom the depth of greatness of such men..... but one thing

is a fact of human history that such men are born rarely.... What different people around them see are the waves and ripples on the surface at different moments.... It is difficult of technology that so far there is no way to encapsule their wisdom in some sort of a mini-chip which could be embedded in others' minds, so that they too would be blessed with such rich intellectual inheritance!

Dr. H.S. Rissam
Cardiologist

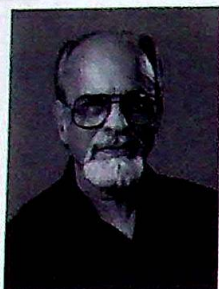
Indira Mahindra

In the summer of 1954 the families of Harish Mahindra and Kashi Poddar decided to take a holiday in Srinagar. Since Lala Tirath Ram Amla was the Willys Jeep dealer there, he was requested to make arrangements for the large contingent. That being a busy season, the usual hotels were already reserved. Lalaji, as he has since being called by us, did not inform us as such. On arrival we discovered, much to our embarrassment, that he had accommodated us in his brand new home. His own family stayed packed in a tiny annexe during our stay. It was embarrassing to say the least, but we had to accept the situation as there was no choice.

Thanks to that generous gesture, intimate contact, and Lalaji's warm and generous personality, an enduring family friendship has resulted that continues down the generations. There is deep trust between us all. For example, when I had to go to the States with Harish, I left my three young children in his care.

May there be many more blessed years added to his 90 - for our sake.

As he repeats when he takes his evening walk, "JAI MATA DI"!

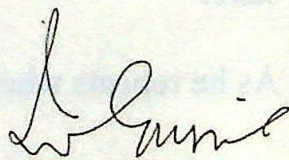


I K Gujral
Former Prime Minister
India

January 16, 2004

It has been my privilege to enjoy Lala Tirath Ram Amla's friendship for nearly four decades now. He is a warmhearted friend who has always kept the higher interest of the Nation above any consideration. As an M.P of long standing he was highly respected by all sides of the House. He spoke little but he made his presence felt all the time. On issues pertaining to J&K, he was always a voice of sanity. One could always count on him as a wise counsel who would give his assessment without any prejudice. In a way his is a remarkable story of a man who like Lincon went from Log House to the White House. Lala Tirath Ram may not have made such a mark in politics but his social status is equally remarkable.

I wish him very long life.



[I.K. GUJRAL]

5, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 011
Tel. : 379-4433, 301-4300 Fax : 379-4444
E-mail : gujralik@sansad.nic.in, gujralik@alpha.nic.in

JAGMOHAN

(Former Minister of Tourism & Culture)

E 48 Panchsheel Park

New Delhi-110 016

Tel. : 51753480 /81

TIRATH RAM AMLA

I came to know Lala Tirath Ram Amala when I was appointed Governor of Jammu and Kashmir in April, 1984. At that time, the conditions in the State were highly unstable. The anti-India and pro-Pakistan elements were very active. Earlier, on October 13, 1983, deplorable acts of subversion were witnessed during the one day international cricket match between India and West Indies. Shortly afterwards, in the first week of February, 1984, the Indian diplomat, Ravindera Mhatre, posted at Birmingham, was kidnapped and then murdered. In this tension-ridden atmosphere, I found Lalaji a picture of composure who could provide sound and balanced analysis of the situation. His views were respected by all. He rendered valuable services to both the State and Centre. He enjoyed confidence of late (Mrs.) Indira Gandhi who made it a point to consult him on all important issues pertaining to Kashmir.

Lala Tirath Ram remained member of Rajya Sabha for 21 years and made a significant contribution at the national level. He shunned flamboyancy, spoke to the point and was invariably lucid in his analysis. I had quite a few opportunities to hear him when I was nominated as member of Rajya Sabha in June 1990. With equal sincerity and expertise, he articulated the special problems of all the three main regions of the State – Valley, Jammu and Ladakh. He was equally popular in all the regions.

JAGMOHAN

(Former Minister of Tourism & Culture)

E 48 Panchsheel Park

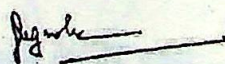
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Tel. : 51753480 /81

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Rising from a humble position, Lala Tirath Ram built, by dint of hard and solid work, a large and successful business house. His contribution to the development of tourism and hotel industry in the State of J&K and also in the capital city of Delhi has been immense. His service to the cause of charity are equally telling. His Trust - Tirath Ram Satya Devi Charitable Trust - has been extending liberal help to the poor and the needy. His spiritual dispositions are well known. Though in his nineties, he is still active and espouses every worthy cause.

Lalaji has unbounded zest for life and seems to believe : " Life is a song, sing it; life is a journey, complete it; life is a mystery, unfold it; life is an opportunity, utilise it; and life is a dream, realise it."


(JAGMOHAN)

Justice A. S. Anand
Chairperson
(Former Chief Justice of India)



My earliest recollection of Tirath uncle is when I was in school. Our families were friendly with each other. Tirath uncle and my father had a number of common friends like Dr. Ali Jan, Shri Sonam Narboo, Kh. G.M.Chicken and many others. What I remember distinctly is that Tirath uncle was a leading Forest Lessee in the State and my father, who was in business, held monopoly for sale and distribution of Cement in the State. Their friends had nicknamed Tirath uncle as "Timber Queen" and my father as "Cement King"!!

After my graduation I left the State for studying law at Lucknow and then went to London for higher studies. On my return, I settled down in Chandigarh for legal practice. During this period, my meetings with Tirath uncle and his family were only either when I visited Kashmir or at some functions in Delhi.

In 1975, I went to J & K on my appointment as a judge of the J & K High Court. Krishan and Usha, Vijay and Ramesh Khattar & Kiran and Kumar Dhar received us with great warmth and once again friendly relations between the two families revived.

5, तुगलक रोड, नई दिल्ली-110011, भारत
5, Tughlak Road, New Delhi-110011, India.
Tel. : 91-011-2301 8085 (R) 91-011-2334 7065 (O) Fax : 91-011-2334 0016 (O)
E-mail : nhrc@ren.nic.in

Justice A. S. Anand
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(Former Chief Justice of India)



Tirath uncle, whenever and wherever he met me, at his house or at my home or at any other function, would always insist that I should do some physical exercise and at least go for a walk. I was allergic to any type of physical exercise! I would often avoid replying his question, whether I had started walking or not? I think he sensed that I was not doing any walking at all or any other physical activity. He was concerned.

My father passed away in 1982 and after that Tirath uncle became even more caring and protective. One evening we were having dinner at the residence of Romi and K.K. Mehra. Tirath uncle was there too with his family and told me *"I know you are not going for walks but you cannot get away from it. I shall come to your house in the morning and pick you up and take you for a walk"*. I thought that the "threat" was only by the way and may be it was given after a drink or two!! I was wrong. Next morning prompt at 6.00 am, Tirath uncle was at the gate and told the Santry on duty to give a call to my room. I came out and saw Tirath uncle all ready to go for a walk. I tried to make excuses by saying that it would take me some time to get ready and that we could go for walk on some other day. I thought he would agree. He didn't and told me that he will wait till I got ready!! I got ready and went for walk with him. Thereafter it became a daily routine. Initially I was reluctant but he was insistent and while I was hesitant he was persistent. Finally, I gave in and enjoyed my morning walks with him. During these walks we exchanged our view on a variety of subjects.

5, तुगलक रोड, नई दिल्ली-110011, भारत

5, Tughlak Road, New Delhi-110011, India.

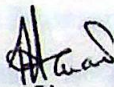
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E-mail : nhrc@ren.nic.in

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The concern for others has been Tirath uncle's plus point. He is known to be a caring friend, a helpful guide and a loving human being. Not only myself but my wife, Mala, and our children have been the beneficiaries of his affection.


(A.S. Anand)

5, तुगलक रोड, नई दिल्ली-110011, भारत
5, Tughlak Road, New Delhi-110011, India.
Tel. : 91-011-2301 8085 (R) 91-011-2334 7065 (O) Fax : 91-011-2334 0016 (O)
E-mail : nhrc@ren.nic.in



March 7, 2005

My dear Rohit,

It is a matter of great personal satisfaction for me that Lala Tirath Ram Amla, whom I fondly call Lalaji, is completing 92 years on 10.5.2005.

I first met him decades back to seek an out of turn allotment of a Fiat car as a young lawyer – a status symbol those days. I vainly tried to impress him to seek a discount but he reluctantly gave up his dealership commission. I came out dissatisfied and yet impressed with his gait and talk. Our acquaintance turned into a friendship later based on mutual respect.

Lalaji's life is a story of rags to riches. Very few people know that he started as a ~~milk vendor~~ ^{Kutch Supervisor} and ended up as the most successful businessman – politician of his time. I love his adaptability and he can adjust to any level to make you comfortable and win you over.

Lalaji is a great survivor, a shrewd businessman-cum-politician, an elderly statesman and a great visionary. Very few businessmen possess a prospective of men and matters as he does. He is the one of those stalwarts who combines in him a deep insight and a broad outlook.

Lalaji is a living history. He has witnessed the ups and downs of this country's politics, more particularly that of Jammu &

Justice B. A. Khan



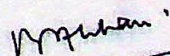
37, Aurangzeb Road,
New Delhi-110011
Tele. : 011-23793855 (R)
23385421-30 (C)
Fax : 23782731

Kashmir and has been a back-stage actor in many a political drama. Though a ranked Congressman, he always maintained his personal relationship with friends and foes across the Board and that too in the vicious personalised politics of Jammu & Kashmir. He has friends in all political camps and yet no one ever suspected his Congress credentials at the relevant time. He is one of those few who maintained a secret link with Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah when he was the odd man out and played a great role in bringing him around to join the main stream which ultimately culminated in the Indira-Sheikh Accord in 1975.

Lalaji's contribution in different fields and his role in Jammu & Kashmir affairs is indeed significant. How history records is for the historians to decide. To me, he is a great friend, a noble soul, a great human being, a man of courage and conviction, a clever and crafty businessman-cum-politician and highly emotional man at times.

Lalaji is destined to break barriers of age. May God bless him with many more years in the service of his people.

Yours sincerely,


(B.A. KHAN)

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Mr. Rohit Khattar
Managing Director
Old World Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi-110003.

My regular walks in the morning and evening in the Central Park in Maharani Bagh initiated me in to come in to contact with a bright-
 Personally Shri. Tark-Ram Anla.
 He is also gifted with a passion to enjoy daily walks. In a way we are Co-Travelers in a holy cause against the onslaught of old age.

Shri. Anla, though carries a stick with him during walks, never uses it while walking. He walks straight & erect without any sign of bend in the back. After walking a few rounds, he sits and takes to meditation for some time. Shri. Anla is a Pleasant Personality with a positive bent of mind.

He is not afraid of old age.
 Talking with him is rewarding
 Depression, frustration and despondency
 do not touch him.
 While walking around,
 he generally greets people
 - with a 'Namaste' or 'Gai' 'Gai'
 'Mati Di' with a religious
 favour. He is always with a
 smile on his face. Old age
 does not seem to have any
 effect on his enthusiasm
 and will to live.

Harbans Lal

LALA TIRATH RAM AMLA

How we know each other?

I know this grand old man, since my childhood, though he never knew me till perhaps a few years back, when at his Broadway Hotel Srinagar, a farewell party was held in honour of Justice A.S. Anand, the then Chief Justice of J&K, on his transfer to Madras, by the members of Srinagar Bar.

In August 2002, I was taken seriously ill and shifted to AIIMS, Delhi for treatment. In these days, Mr. D.D. Thakur, the renowned jurist of J&K, was also admitted there, for the same dreaded disease. Mr. Thakur alongwith Mr. Amla called on me. Mr. Amla, popularly known as 'Lala Ji', put me surprisingly, a strange question, as to since when, we know each other. I had to reply him frankly.

The fact of the matter is that Lala Ji, was a close friend of late Aga Maqsood Ali (my relation), the then Income Tax Officer (retired as Commissioner of Excise & Taxation) also a great man of his time indeed, alongwith late Dr. Ali Mohd. Jan, an eminent doctor, our state has ever produced. For the first time in my life, I saw two, very attractive and charming personalities with late Aga Sahib. All the three, on the very first sight impressed me so much that I wished to have also such a personality. Amongst the three, the personality of Lala Ji impressed me most beyond any measure. However, I had never a chance to interact with him, till we met ^{at} ~~in~~ the farewell function mentioned above. I couldn't however resist in asking late Aga Sahib about Lala Ji's position. He told me that leaving aside the apparent

Justice S.M. Rizvi
Retd. Acting C.J.
Of J & K High Court

personality of Lala Ji, he has seen his inner qualities as a great conscientious and benevolent man. He has immense qualities of head & heart. He also narrated some incidents to me about the great sacrifices he has made in his life, for needy and poor, friends and foes, orphans and rustics, equally, without any consideration of caste and creed. These narrations left such an indelible impressions in my mind, which I, so far could not forget.

I didn't know much about his family life. However, from reliable sources I have come to know that he is one of the wealthiest persons of J&K State. He has been a successful businessman by dint of his hard labour and honest means. I have also come to know that he has been a shrewd politician of his age, commanding respect from all great politicians of the Country. He has also been a great parliamentarian and a member of Indian Parliament for a pretty long time.

As I am not personally interested in wealth or in politics, so I have not probed much, into this field of Lala Ji. In this country I have seen many wealthy persons and politicians, but most of them have not contributed anything towards the downtrodden people of the country.

In my considered view only such people deserve respect, whether they are politicians or richmen, who contribute something to needy and poor people of the country, and that too, for the sake of 'Almighty' and in good faith, beyond any material considerations.

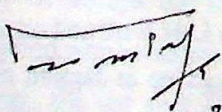
After my retirement, I had gone to Jammu for a couple of months, in winter. I saw Lala Ji off and on in Jammu. I once inquired from him, whether he puts up at Jammu or Delhi. He told me that occasionally he has to come to Jammu from Delhi to look after his business. I told him that why he should work so hard in old age, when God has given him in abundance and moreover has grown up children, etc.

could look after such interests. He was wonder struck by my question. Then I incidentally discussed with him the 'Islamic Concept' of 'Sadqa Jariah'. I told him that as per all religious scriptures, this was the only thing which helps a human being to get his salvation. He told me that this was the spirit of Hinduism and also all God loving people do help the needy & poor people according to their means. My daughter Smt. Vijay Lakshmi Khattar has already created a Trust of this nature in the name of Tirath Ram Satya Devi Charitable Trust where from the needy & deserving people are helped. The Trust is financed by the members of the family and has few crores in the shape of its properties & cash.

After some time Lala Ji was seen by me at Jammu. He told me that the Trust has a small Hospital for the poor & needy people at Gandhi Nagar Extension, Jammu. This proved to me the philanthropic and inner quality of Lala Ji, which I have yet to see in any other person.

May Allah bestow Lala Ji, long and long span of life, to help the poor and needy people, more and more.

As a matter of fact, I feel ashamed to write some comments about such a great person, when I, consider myself just a 'dim lamp' before a shining Sun like Lala Ji.


5-10-03

LALA TIRATH RAM AMLA – A LIVING LEGEND

World history was at a crucial stage on the turn of the Twentieth Century. In the East Mao-Se-Tung history's best known Chinese, was a youthful follower of the aging Sun-Yat-Sen. In Russia Lenin had emerged as the Leader of the Bolshevik Wing of the Social Democratic Party, but the failure of the Moscow rising had forced him to take refuge in Switzerland. In the West Adolph Hitler was still painting and peddling cards in the streets of Munich, while Albert Einstein was working hard on his theory of Relativity. World War-I had not yet begun but preparations for that holocaust had already started. Among those busy with the preparations was Winston Churchill of England as the first Lord of admiralty engaged in expanding the English Naval Force.

Nearer home the country was ruled by Lord Hardinge as its Viceroy. Bengal had been partitioned but Mahatma Gandhi had not yet joined the Freedom Movement in India. His crusade against injustice to his countrymen in South Africa had kept him away from the homeland. Kashmir like many other states in the country was ruled by a benevolent Maharaja with a vast territory

spreading up to Gilgit in the North and the parched plains of Shivalik in the South. On the Western front of this Princely State lay Muzafarabad, the confluence of Kishan Ganga and the Jhelum. This town was before the partition of the country and the annexation of a part of the State by Pakistan, the Gateway to North West Frontier Province inhabited by Pathans. History bears ample testimony to the Pathans being among the most difficult Tribes in the world to be ruled or subjugated. Numerous attempts by the British and repeated military expeditions had failed to subdue the Tribal warlords who loved to loot and plunder, murder of the hapless being only incidental. The British had to re-orient their policy towards the Tribals during Lord Curzon's time with a view to make peace with a traditionally violent section of the population forming a part of the great British empire. It was here at Muzafarabad that Lala Tirath Ram Amla was born on what was a festival day of Baisakhi heralding the beginning of a New Year according to the Bikrini Samvat Era, 1969

Lalaji's personal tragedies struck him rather early in life. The first to come was the untimely demise of his mother when he was barely five years old. His father brought up with care, love and indulgence much more than that shown to his siblings. The youngest and the most tender of the offsprings, he thought was also the most vulnerable. Incidents about how Lalaji's father took

care of him as a motherless child left a deep impression on Lalaji's young and impressionable mind. He saw in his father an embodiment of good parenting that greatly if not fully made up for the absence of his mother. Most notable of the childhood impressions was Lalaji's feeling responsible even at a young age when his father would consult him in regard to matters far more serious than a boy of his age could comprehend or comment upon. It was at this tender age that Lalaji learnt his first lessons from his father on the dignity of labour by being asked to attend to his daily chores himself. As years rolled by, Lalaji grew into a precocious adolescent. He had the divine gift of Supreme self-confidence and the will to work hard. His father's desire to make him a doctor fired his ambition which took him to Lahore in search of a break to pursue his studies in medicine. Tragedy however was not far behind. The sudden death of his father at Muzafarabad forced Lalaji to return home giving up his plans of becoming a Doctor. Instead he joined S.P.College in Srinagar for graduation in Arts.

It was during his days in S.P.College that Lalaji first met his wife to be. A Romantic at heart Lalaji found his soul mate in a girl who was born deaf and dumb. He had to learn sign language to communicate with her. An extremely handsome man so very conscious of keeping himself fit with Telmalish (Oil Massage) Lalaji could have married any other good looking girl in his community.

His family especially his brothers were not in favour of the alliance and even accused Lalaji of going for a handicapped girl in search of dowry. Even the girl's parents were not too sure of the success of the proposed marital alliance and took considerable time in taking a decision in the matter. Lalaji's perseverance however conquered the resistance to his marriage from whatever source the same may have come. Even the planets had to make way for the union with Lalaji first tying the knot with a bush in a *hasina* of Muzaffarabad before getting married to his bride.

I have often wondered about how deep and abiding Lalaji's love must have been which has remained fresh and fragrant even after sixty years of wear and tear implicit in any marriage. To marry a girl who was handicapped both in speech and hearing and with whom Lalaji had to forever communicate only in sign language was an unorthodox decision which one could have taken in an impulse but to remain steadfast in one's commitment to the marriage vows was by no means an ordinary achievement. I have during two decades of my close association with Lalaji seen him and his wife sharing with each other such harmony and deep understanding that I have often felt that marriages would have been more successful if one of the two spouses did not have the ability to speak or hear. I am amazed at the ease with which the couple conveys to each other their

feelings and sentiments. This marriage was certainly made in heaven for the way it has survived and blossomed unmindful of the handicap shows that it had the blessings of God Almighty in great abundance.

The couple's cup of joy was filled by the three children they raised out of the wedlock each one more good looking and brilliant than the other. Those who have met Lalaji's son Krishan would find in him embodiment of humility and effacing modesty. He is a sound businessman which he was groomed by his father to be. He thinks for himself while being considerate to the views of others that may not share his perceptions about men or matters. Lalaji is despite all this, a father difficult to live up to for any child. He is a perfectionist to a fault. The result is that anything that he may like any one else to do, is best done only if it is done by Lalaji himself. I have seen Lalaji at the age of 70 years inside a five feet deep foundation of an old building at B.C.Road where he was setting up a Maruthi Show Room demonstrating with his own hands to the labourers how to take out the bricks used in the old foundation without breaking or damaging them. Any one out of his children or grand children would have found it difficult to emulate Lalaji in this feat, their willingness to learn and their respect for dignity of labour notwithstanding. It is for such people as Lalaji a matter of wholly misplaced regret that their children did not do so well as they had done

themselves. What they don't appreciate is that God has not been fair in distributing talents and capacities. Some individuals are more talented than others. Some more enterprising than the rest. Life in this world may indeed have been dull if human conduct or nature were to be the same or predictably similar. There is always an element of the super natural that guides our destinies. What is important is that parents give to their children good Samskars and inspire them to touch greater heights. Whether they do reach those height is a matter which is beyond human control. One can be at peace with oneself and others only when one realises that even the spirit of adventure or enterprise is a matter of divine grace over which humans have no claim by birth. If Lalaji made it big in life because of his qualities of head and heart, it is because he was blessed by God Almighty with those qualities and because he was placed in circumstances where such qualities alone could help him become what he is today. Lalaji's children have done extremely well and his grand children are excelling their father and Grandfather. But the notable success that they have achieved remains a little less than what Lalaji would consider really remarkable.

I had heard about Lalaji for a number of years before I actually met him sometime in the year 1980. He was referred to me by my father who had known him as an important Leader of the Congress Party and a Member

of Parliament from Jammu and Kashmir. A dispute had arisen between Lalaji and his partner Pt. Trilochan Dutt in connection with the flourishing business which the families of the two old friends turned foes had been running in partnership. An attempt made by none less than Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah the then Chief Minister of the State to bring about an amicable settlement having failed, the matter had to be taken to the Court in two suits for dissolution of partnerships and rendition of accounts in connection with the two partnership concerns.

Lalaji explained to me the background on the basis whereof I drafted the suits and secured interim orders from the Srinagar Bench of the High Court. Trilochan Dutt himself a former Minister and a Member of Parliament was a well known figure in the State who was respected by his admirers for being a bold and assertive politician from the Jammu region. The people of this region saw in Panditji a leader who could prevent the Kashmiri hegemony over the people of Jammu. Dutt was therefore a tough opponent not only because of his stature but also because he was capable of thinking about the issues and even formulating his responses in the Court proceedings.

The legal battle in the Court was thus fought fiercely involving complicated legal issues and issues touching business morality. It was in the course of this

litigation that Lalaji came very close to me and started sharing with me different incidents in his life, some that were pleasant and others that were not. The vast age difference and the generation gap between the two of us started disappearing. I started discovering Lalaji as a self-made and self respecting man who had risen by the sheer dint of his hard work and wisdom. A man whose credibility as a friend surpassed all other qualities that God had bestowed upon him in such great abundance. He told me how he had started his life as a Kuth Supervisor and later as a small time contractor and slowly risen with hard work and dedication.

In one of the letters which Pt. Trilochan Dutt had written to Lalaji during the period of strife between them, Lalaji was described as a person of no consequence who in his early days used to keep sitting outside Pt. Trilochan Dutt's office to get a petty bill for the work done by him passed. But, Lalaji had no qualms about accepting and even frequently remembering his humble beginning. He wrote back to Pt. Trilochan Dutt that if he had waited outside his office for getting his bill cleared it was not because he expected a favour but because he was entitled to that small payment which he had earned because of his honest and hard work, unlike many others who made a living by smuggling goods across the Sialkot border.

Pt. Trilochan Dutt despite his political stature was proving no match for Lalaji in their fight over the control of their business. The result was that the business had to be wound up in which Trilochan Dutt had to suffer greater hardship than Lalaji who was because of his tremendous resources and connections at various levels successful in getting the franchisees transferred in the name of a new concern that he floated.

I always regretted my being instrumental in some measure to the winding up of the partnership business which was for a long time not only a source of income for two known personalities of their time but which gave to both of them tremendous clout having regard to the fact that one had to wait in a long queue for even a two wheeler leave alone a car that carried a premium in the market those days. In retrospect, I felt that Trilochan Dutt was more than any one else responsible for failure of efforts which I and Lala Harbailal Bhagotra had initiated to bring about an amicable settlement between the two. Trilochan Dutt was not realistic in his approach towards the litigation while Lalaji was cool towards any proposal for settlement partly because in a fight based on prestige, he could absorb the loss more than what Trilochan Dutt could and partly because the treatment and hurt which Trilochan Dutt had heaped upon Lalaji did not call for any remorse for the loser.

It was during numerous visits to Srinagar in connection with the cases with Trilochan Dutt, that I had the opportunity of seeing and enjoying Lalaji's hospitality. His house in Sonwar was always buzzing with activity entertaining guests from all over the country. Politicians in and out of power belonging to different political hues and shades were Lalaji's personal friends, the political equations making little difference for their mutual regard or affection for each other. Because of Lalaji's long innings in the Parliament stretching over two decades he had developed personal friendship and earned the admiration of almost everyone who came in contact with him. It was therefore impossible for any one known to Lalaji to visit or leave Kashmir without meeting and enjoying his hospitality. Authentic Kashmiri cuisine locally called Wazwan, animated discussion on politics and poetry used to be the highlights of the evenings with Lalaji's family playing gracious hosts.

Lalaji is a rare embodiment of worldly wisdom. He has the ability to judge men and earn their admiration by what may be simple but a supremely effective gesture of kindness. I realised this during the time Lalaji was fighting his case against Trilochan Dutt. My staff including my stenographers Babu Singh and S. Sunmukh Singh knew my association with Lalaji. There was therefore no question of any one of them demanding any remuneration for the work they would do for Lalaji as

members of my staff They would all the same be busy with enough that was on their hands and any number of clients pursuing them to get their work done in preference to others. Lalaji knew this and even when he was not expected to remunerate any one of the clerks or stenographers for whatever work related to Lalaji's cases, Lalaji would without my knowledge force some money, usually much more than their legitimate dues, into their pockets. The result was that Lalaji's work never suffered. The staff was ever so happy to do whatever Lalaji desired them to do. He had earned their loyalty and admiration both. They knew that Lala was paying them even when he need not do so. The very thought behind Lalaji's gesture showed his deep respect for the dignity of labour and the feelings of others no matter their station in life. It was only after a long time that I realised the secret of my staff's over zealousness and willingness to do Lalaji's work. He had because of his worldly wisdom created a fan following in my chamber as well.

Lalaji it appears had developed a liking for public life at a young age. His friendship with late Sri. D.P. Dhar who is believed to be one of the most brilliant political minds that Kashmir has produced had given Lalaji great insight into Kashmir affairs and deep understanding of the kashmiri political psyche. Prominent Kashmiri leaders Sri. G.M. Sadiq and Sri. Syed

Mir Qasim were Lalaji's personal friends who shared with Lalaji a deep personal as also an understanding of issues that beset Jammu & Kashmir. Lalaji's election to the Rajya Sabha from the State of Jammu & Kashmir brought him into political focus at the national level. As a Member of Parliament, he came in close contact with Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister. A great Judge of men, Mrs. Gandhi was impressed by Lalaji's low profile, presence and abiding loyalty to her. Lalaji had earned the rare privilege of going to Mrs. Gandhi at any time with any problem relating to his State. He may not have wielded ministerial authority at any time, but that did not make him in any way less effective in touching the lives of those whom he represented in the Parliament. His proximity to Mrs. Gandhi was a fact well known in the political circles, which gave him the advantage of influencing decisions whenever and wherever he wished to do so. Mrs. Gandhi in particular had great faith in Lalaji's opinion on any matter relating to Kashmir affairs. She believed that Lalaji's opinion on any specific issue was honest, fair and realistic, having regard to the ground realities. It was not therefore surprising to see Lalaji continue as a Member of Parliament for over twenty years, a feat rarely possible for a person belonging to a small State like Jammu & Kashmir.

As a Parliamentarian, Lalaji made his contribution in his own subtle way. Vociferous vehemence in

parliamentary debating was not Lalaji's forte. Expression of his opinion even on the floor of the House was free from rhetoric and always based on objectivity and fairness. His commitment to the Congress party did not however prevent him from thinking independently about issues of national importance and presenting his view point without fear of criticism by party leaders. Lalaji was perhaps the first political leader from the State of Jammu and Kashmir who had predicted the impending militancy that was slowly rising its head in the valley. He had forcefully argued for timely action and contradicted the official stand of the Party in regard to the prevailing Law and Order situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The Press gave considerable coverage to the speech made by Lalaji for it was considered unconventional for a Member of the Congress Party to contradict the Minister on the floor of the House which almost amounted to saying that the Minister was misleading the House. Subsequent developments in the valley which has been having a blood bath for the past over 10 years proved Lalaji's apprehensions true. It showed that people living far away in Delhi are sometimes so very mistaken about the ground conditions which men like Lalaji understand so well.

In the world of business where Lalaji created an empire unparalleled in the history of Jammu & Kashmir, Lalaji's capacity to make people think the way he wanted them to, played a great role. A five star hotel, a Cinema Hall, lucrative business in company franchises, Orchards, houses and tourist huts were not possible for an ordinary soul starting from a straw. These were much more difficult for a person who had to devote a great deal of his time for keeping his commitments in public life. But then, Lalaji is no ordinary mortal. He had the God given ability to foresee events and the wisdom to tailor his approach accordingly. This synergy of vision and cold pragmatism yielded rich dividends for Lalaji in whatever he did. I don't think Lalaji has ever regretted a decision that he took whether the same be in business or in the quick sands of Politics. But of all the qualities that the man possesses and which might have

contributed to his success, one quality which surpasses all others is Lalaji's commitment as a friend. I don't think that anything which anyone has ever done for Lalaji has remained unacknowledged. I have seen Lalaji remember with gratitude small favours which people may have shown to him at any stage of his life particularly those that came at the stage when he was not doing too well or was faced by a dilemma. Acknowledgement of a debt of gratitude is itself tantamount to part payment of the debt. Lalaji I am sure has paid back with interest all the debts of gratitude that he owed to those who helped him in small or greater measure at different stages of his life. The repayment has been according to me many times more than what was required - a sign of how grateful a soul Lalaji is. I remember, Rohit of whom Lalaji is so very proud, telling me that Lalaji, still has a long list of old friends whom he remembers on festivals like Diwali with a basket of fruit or box of sweets delivered to them wherever they are. These friends are senior citizens. They may have been politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, lawyers or doctors. Most if not all of them are no longer active in their respective fields. But that is not important. They may be of no utility to Lalaji or his family now, but that is not the test for Lalaji's friendship or fondness for them. For him a friend is a friend forever regardless whether or not he is of some immediate or future use. His commitment is abiding and altruistic. A quality which is so rare in the modern world driven by materialism and greed. Lalaji's commitment is only one side of the story. The number of those whom Lalaji has helped in life is much more than those who have done anything for him. Everyone of those who used Lalaji as a ladder to rise, has not remembered him or acknowledged his contribution. I have seen some such ungrateful souls who at the height of the glory which they owed to Lalaji in a great measure forgetting and ignoring him. Lalaji did not feel hurt by the conduct of such infidels. He would say that the true character of man is often seen only when he is put in authority and when he knows that his former benefactor can do nothing more for him. His experience in life with such ungrateful has also been rich

as with many others who are ready to do anything for him.'

Lalaji's life has been a saga of abundance. He has been blessed with good health and long life. He has commanded and still commands respect and esteem among the high and mighty of this country. The presence of the Prime Minister on the occasion of his 90th Birthday celebrations apart from a host of other political figures and persons from various walk of life most of whom bowed low before Lalaji or touched his feet shows his stature and the sway that he has over men and matters. In terms of wealth and material possessions also Lalaji has been blessed with abundance. But what is remarkable is that Lalaji has refused to be drawn into the rat race of making money and amassing wealth which is the case with very many people who may have had opportunities similar to the ones Lalaji got in life. He lives in relative austerity in a rented house in Delhi, but has created a Charitable Trust in his and his wife's name to which he has dedicated valuable property in Jammu apart from generous donations in cash towards the corpus. The Trust runs a Charitable Hospital in Gandhinagar, Jammu and caters to the medical needs of the less fortunate sections of the society. Deeply religious Lalaji sincerely believes that service of the poor is the real religion and true faith for one can see divinity in the eyes of the poor in distress if you reach out to them by sharing

their pain and suffering. I recently recommended to Lalaji for financial help my peon whose 2 years old daughter suffers from what is called Gaucher's disease involving expensive treatment far beyond the capacity of the father of the little girl. Lalaji readily agreed to help even if the medicines were to be imported from America. Thanks to him the parents of the girl who were in great distress have now the hope to save the innocent life.

One can write a book on Lalaji for there are so many facets of this multifaceted personality that one can hardly feel tired of praising him. But then what I am writing is not a book. It is but a summary of reminiscences of my association with him; and has therefore to be subject to the discipline of length and content. One cannot however conclude a note on Lalaji and his life without admiring his romantic nature and love for poetry. Lalaji was a handsome man even at the age of seventy when I first met him. He must have been one of the best human specimen when he was young. Physical appearance is however but one part of a person's personality. It is his wisdom and intellect that add the element of attraction which others find hard to resist. Lala possessed all these in abundance. His love for Urdu poetry particularly for Ghalib's poetry is but the icing on the cake. Lalaji has started forgetting details, but even if he wished so to do he can never forget Ghalib. He remembers almost the entire Diwan by heart and often

quotes a couplet so appropriate for the occasion that it conveys more than a thousand words.

Lalaji is already past ninety. He has been a witness to great many events and cataclysmic changes that have taken place in the world order during the last century. He has seen his contemporaries pass away one by one after playing the role that destiny had carved out for them. Mao Se Tung's China has long since recovered from the pangs of a revolution. Lenin's Soviet Union has fallen apart bringing an end to the era of cold war. Hitler who brought the scourge of World War-II lost the war and his life both. Einstien saw his Theory of relativity accepted by the world before departing, Churchill was triumphant in the war but lost the election. Gandhi liberated one fifth of the human race from the yoke of foreign rule by a non-violent Satyagrah before falling to the bullets of the assassins. Maharaja of Kashmir lost a large part of his State to Pakistan including Lalaji's Muzzafarabad. The inexorable forces of change have transformed the world by the end of the second millennium. Lalaji has seen these events from close quarters and savoured the delight of himself performing a role in the history of this country. Few in this world have that kind of distinction and fewer still who have seen the events and are living today to tell the tale. God has been very kind to Lalaji and to those whom he befriended, for if one has a friend as true and dependable as Lalaji, one

need not ask for anything more. May God keep showering his blessings on Lalaji and may he live for a thousand years.

(JUSTICE TIRATH S THAKUR)

Bangalore

21.12.2003

**LALA TIRATH RAM AMLA, FATHERLY – FIGURE AND A
FRIENDS INDEED**

My association with Lalaji whom I have always respectfully address as "Papa Jee" dated back to the year 1959 when he agreed to appoint me as auditor of his Empire after the death of my father-in-law late Sh. Dilbag Roy, a renowned Chartered Accountant of J&K State who was one of his close friends.

Ever since our Association he has been a pillar of strength to me and has always treated all my problems as his own. Papajee has treated my wife Romila as his daughter and my children as his own. His humane and personal qualities are matchless. Papajee is a gentleman at heart, generous and par excellence humanitarian. In fact, in my whole life span of 68 years I have not been able to find any other person bestowed with his personal qualities. His concern for others is his greatest virtue.

He helped me through ^{our} association professionally and financially when ever need arose. I remember vividly he took cudgels with a powerful minister of the J&K State, when he took away one of my Govt. assignment and gave it to his close relative without my apparent fault, and got the order reversed. The other incident which comes to my mind is when I suddenly got very ill after dinner at his residence in 1981, he with the help of Late Dr. Ali Jan, his very dear friend, got my bedroom converted into almost a ICU and of his own made all arrangements to send me to Germany for my treatment. He is a friend indeed in true sense of the word.

My family always love to be with him and seek his wise advice in various day to day affairs of ^{our} ~~one~~ life.

Papajee is a true professional, workaholic and hard task master as far as business is concerned. He is perfectionist in each and every sphere of life. I wish I could have proficiency with words to illustrate my inner feelings about the ^{pr} ~~pe~~sonal qualities, especially professional competence of Papajee.

Papajee has always treated me like his son and I am proud of it!

Romila and children join me in ^{our} ~~my~~ prayer for his long healthy and peaceful life.

Dr. K. L. Kapoor

(MS, F.I.C.S)

Formerly
Professor and H.O.D Surgery
Govt. Medical College & Associated Hospitals,
Jammu-180001

New Kapoor Nursing Home
8/9, Bakshinagar, Jammu

Lala Tirth Ram Amla became a very renowned figure of the state by means of his untiring efforts and qualities of head and heart. It was a matter of pride and privilege to have been so close to him. My association with Lala Ji dates back to year 1955 when I happened to be in Srinagar, in connection with my nomination for MBBS studies.

It reminds me about an incident of the year 1955 when I stopped the car of the then chief minister of the state (Late Janab Bakshi Gulam Mohd) to narrate to him, the way, I was being prevented from seeing him in connection with my selection for MBBS studies. No sooner did I squat in front of Chief Minister's car; many police men in plain clothes pounced upon me and dragged me to near by Kottn Bagh Thana, Srinagar. However, I was released the same evening when Lala Ji pleaded on my behalf with the administration. Because of his great political clout and personal influence no body could say no to him.

Through my marriage in the same family in May, 1967, I came to know many other facts of his life. He was even instrumental in bringing me to the Medical College, Srinagar in Nov, 1967. Hereafter, I came to know many aspects of his career through personal contacts with him. I foundⁱⁿ him a man who was much larger than his actual stature. He was always polite, courteous and respectful to the deserving. But at the same time, very tough, blunt and straight forward. He had a sharp memory, shrewd and very patient to talk to and possessed a pleasing personality blended with jovial nature.

Because of his personal contacts in the corridors of power he would go to any extent to be^{of} any help to deprived and deserving. Many of the families, who migrated from Muzzafrabad to this side of the line of control, owe a lot to him, by way of moral and material help and it continues even to this day.

- Fellow International College of Surgeons
- Life Member Association of Surgeons of India
- Life Member A.S.I.(N.C)
- Member laparoscopic Surgeons of India

Visiting Hours :

Morning : 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Evenings : 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Sundays: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Phone
Resi- 2580945
Clinic- 2584156
Mobile- 09419181036

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New Kapoor Nursing Home
8/9, Bakshinagar, Jammu

He lived a lavish life and always threw Gala parties almost every other day, perhaps believing in wining friends through palate.

By dint of his sheer hard work, dedication and devotion to cause of the needy and deprived, he made a niche for himself in the state and later to the National politics. **Tirath Ram Satya Devi Trust** is one of the facts of this noble personality.

I wish him a long and healthy life.


Dr. K.L. Kapoor
2.3.0

-
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Dr. Karan Singh
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
(RAJYA SABHA)



3, NYAYA MARG
CHANAKYAPURI
NEW DELHI - 110 021

4.2.2004

My dear Rohit,

I have your letter regarding the 90th birthday of Lala Tirath Ram Amla. My association with him goes back over half a century when I went up to Srinagar as a very young man as Regent, Sadar-i-Riyasat and finally Governor. Thereafter, when I entered Lok Sabha, Lalaji was Member of the Rajya Sabha, and our association continues down to the present day.

Lala Tirath Ram is a man of few words, but his political perceptions and commitment to the Congress ideals have always remained very clear. I did not have occasion to be in the same House of Parliament with him, but outside we had a good deal of interaction. Although our political perceptions differed considerably from time to time, I always had high regard for his clarity of thought and commitment to secular and progressive policies. As Treasurer of the J&K P.C.C. Lalaji made a valuable personal contribution to the work of the Congress Party.

It is a matter for great satisfaction that Lala Tirath Ram completed 90 years of his life on 10th May 2003. I wish him many more years of good health and service to society.

Yours sincerely,

Shri Rohit Khattar
Managing Director
Old World Hospitality Pvt.Ltd.
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi-3.

Tel. : 611-1744, 611-5291 Fax : 687-3171
E-mail : karansingh@karansingh.com

Keshub Mahindra
Chairman

March 24, 2005

TIRATH RAM

A relationship which began 60 years ago based on a business association transformed itself very rapidly into one of friendship not only between persons but throughout what I call the Tirath Ram and the Mahindra Clan. What made all this possible was a very special feature of Lalaji as Tirath was affectionately known - his sincerity and total transparency in relationships.

His unmatched hospitality together with a genuine care for all those who he came in contact with built in him a unique character and personality. Apart from his business interests, he devoted a great part of his life to public affairs and was closely affiliated with the ruling party and served as a Member of the Rajya Sabha. Even today our children as well as our grand children keep in close contact with each other and it is so pleasant to see this enduring friendship flourishing. I wish him happiness and good health.

I shall eagerly look forward to reading his biography.

Keshub Mahindra.

GLANCING BACK

It was early Eighties when I was working as a Junior Colleague with Shri T.S. Thakur, Advocate (now Hon'ble Mr. Justice T.S. Thakur, Judge High Court of Delhi, New Delhi) that I came in contact with Lala Tirath Ram Amla Ji. We had our Chamber at Subzi Mandi, Jammu. Though I had heard a lot about Lala Ji (as everybody calls him with respect as Lala Ji) but I got a chance to see him only when he had come to our Chambers at Subzi Mandi, Jammu in connection with his litigation.

The litigation pertained to the partnership concerns of two Groups, one was known as a Group of Pt. Tarlochan Dutt Ji (the then a political heavy weight in the State of Jammu and Kashmir) and the other as Group of Lala Ji. After the case was prepared by Thakur Sahib, I being a Chamber-mate got the privilege to associate with the case. In this connection I had started following the cases of lala Ji in the Court. During this time I had the occasion to discuss the cases with Lala Ji. I could ^{find} ~~found~~ Lala Ji a Man of Clear perception, dedicated and devoted to the goal he wanted to achieve in the litigation. Though I was raw ~~man~~ in the profession, yet Lala Ji reposed lot of confidence in me in handling important cases concerning his prestige. The amount of concern which Lala Ji had shown and the confidence reposed by him in me, impelled my Curiosity to

work as hard as I could do in those cases. By this I succeeded in getting the special affinity, love and affection of Lala Ji. All his cases were conducted by my senior Sh T.S. Thakur personally in the Court, yet Lala Ji expected me to be with Thakur Sahib. This I believed was only to encourage me. But later, I could find Lala Ji was the person who first reposed his confidence as a client in me also.

The cases were being followed in routine with all success we wanted to achieve. One incident which I vividly remember is that in one of the cases before the learned Sub Judge, Jammu filed by the opposite party, I had appeared in the contempt application on behalf of Lala Ji without Lala Ji having been served in the matter. This necessarily required Lala Ji's personal appearance in the matter because the Judge wanted him to be present in the court. I had in fact undertaken before the Court that Lala Ji would be produced on the next date. This was not correct on my part as in the Civil contempt I had to insist that the personal presence of the contemner was not a must. I did not know this. When the matter came to the notice of Thakur Sahib, he rebuked me and told me that it was not expected of me to have appeared in the matter without the notice having been served upon the party (contemner), muchless agreed to the personal presence of the contemner.. This is perhaps the first and last time as my juniorship that I suffered the wrath of Thakur Sahib. I was little disturbed about the treatment which I had suffered

at the hands of Thakur Sahib, Lala Ji felt it and encouraged me by saying "*You need not worry, We will face the contempt*". This really gave me consolation and I worked in the brief with more dedication and devotion.

Lala Ji was always considered in our Chamber as a 'very-very' important person. Not because he was an important client and also not because of the reason that his cases were conducted by us, but because of the special attention which he had been giving to the staff of our Chamber. As and when his case was to be drafted our Stenographer S. Sukham Singh had been getting type charges more than what he could claim. In the office no body could charge from Lala Ji for the work done, yet Lala Ji had been paying much more one could expect. This lured us to do Lala Ji's work at *Top Priority*.

I have conducted good number of cases of Lala Ji with Sh T.S. Thakur, Advocate (Now Hon'ble Judge, High Court of Delhi, New Delhi). One case pertained to the plot in Gandhi Nagar, Jammu where Lala Ji was interested. This was a plot where some-body had forcibly tried to take possession. An injunction suit was filed and stay order obtained against the efforts of trespass by the other party. After obtaining the order I had personally gone with Lala Ji on the spot with a Commissioner appointed by the Court. The allegations levelled by us against the trespasser were found to be true in the report of the Commissioner. The order against

dis-possession was confirmed after a good deal of litigation in the Court. This I believe is the plot where Lala Ji has his residential house at Gandhi Nagar, Jammu.

One important aspect which had elevated Lala Ji in my humble estimation was the fact that he was a staunch supporter of the persons who had not succumbed to the pressure of Late Pt. Tarlochan Dutt Ji. When the dispute of M/s Kashmir Motors Corporation started the allegations of embezzlement were levelled by Pt. Tarlochan Dutt Ji. FIR was lodged because of his influence which he had in the police organization. FIR was in fact lodged and got investigated by police at the instance of Pt. Tarlochan Dutt Ji only to ensure that no employee of the Corporation defy his dictates. When some of them did not support Pandit Ji against Lala Ji, he got them booked in the afore stated FIR. The persons like Mr. Purdani, S. Daya Singh and some other employees of the Corporation were un-necessarily roved in. The challan was produced in the Court against these persons for the commission of offences under sections 406/ 420/465/ 467 ^{gRPC} etc. Lala Ji stood by these persons and supported them till the litigation was over. Mr. Purdani and S. Daya Singh are no more. This case is also over with the passage of time. The prosecution could not support the case. Result was that the Magistrate was left with no choice except to acquit the accused persons. Mr. Purdani died during the trial whereas

S. Daya Singh a trusted employee of Lala Ji died after the case was over.

In the Feb 1996, Sh T.S. Thakur was elevated to the Bench. Some of the cases which were being dealt by the office of Thakur Sahib were looked after by me. Even after Thakur Sahib was elevated to the Bench Lala Ji has reposed confidence in me. I feel honoured.

Lala Ji has always been a source of strength and courage to me. He has ^{always stood} ~~believed~~ by me in my difficult times. I remember that just a year back when my brother-in-law was seriously ill he was shifted to Intensive Care Unit of Army Hospital at Dhaulakuan, New Delhi. I remained in Delhi with my family for more than one month. During all this time one vehicle was at my disposal for taking the members of the family and attendants to the patient. For this I am really indebted. I believe that the God has been very kind to Lala Ji and with that I was also lucky to have been associated with Lala Ji. But for my association with Thakur Sahib, I was bound to have been deprived of an association with Lala Ji. Because of his quality he had been admired by his family and friends tremendously. He seemed to me embodiment of 'strength and courage' far above other people I saw.

Lala Ji was very Close to Late Smt Indra Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. She paid him great honour and gave him good assignments also. Lala Ji had successfully completed those assignments. One of those assignments was

the Historic Kashmir Accord. Lala Ji was instrumental in Historic Kashmir Accord with Late Sheikh Mohd Abdullah. Lala Ji remained gentle, modest affectionate man of the time.

Some of the things I have been trying to say in my inadequate prose are so poetically expressed by a Poet that I must let him speak for me. He wrote-

*"Kindliness and grace,
Excellent courtesy,
A Brightness in the face,
Airs of high memory,
Whence came all these to such as he ?
No man less proud than he,
None asked for homage less;
Only he could not be, far off from happiness.
Nature was bound to his success."*

(Kulwant Singh Johal)
Advocate,
High Court of J & K,
Jammu

Jammu.
February 25, 2005

LALA TIRATH RAM AMLA

I feel honoured to have been asked to write about Lala Tirath Ram Amla who, for those who knew him closely and were aware of his various political activities, has become a legend in his lifetime.

When I was a child in Srinagar my Uncle used to tell me wonderful fairy tales - tales of brave warriors, of beautiful princesses, fair handsome princes riding on white flying horses and I used to dream of a fairyland where all these exciting things could take place without any effort on my part. My most favourite story was the tale of "Hatim Tai" - the selfless generous man who spent all his life fulfilling other peoples' needs and who helped needy people at the cost of his own needs. I never imagined then that one day I would come across a real "Hatim Tai".

Lala Tirath Ram Amla was not only the hero of my fairytale as a "Hatim Tai" but was also a handsome prince with almond shaped eyes, curly black hair, riding not a white horse but a convertible - roofless car - red or black colour I cannot recall. I would see him practically every afternoon driving on Residency Road, Srinagar towards the bridge Amira Kadal - this dashing young man in his mid 20's watched by beautiful girls with their hearts throbbing and me, just a teenager, I couldn't resist envying him.

Lalaji's tales of generosity and kindness are so myriad and numerous that any effort on my part to narrate them all would be impossible, especially, as I have personally spent half a century living abroad. Yet I consider it a privilege to pen down my thoughts about him - an awesome task indeed and I am grateful for this opportunity.

Whenever any acquaintance of his fell on lean times, lost his high position or his health, Lalaji has always been there to provide him with all kind of help - house, money, medicinal help, costly drugs from abroad or any other help that he could provide. He did all this in a manner as if his friends or acquaintances were doing Lalaji a favour by accepting his generosity. There have been many such incidents where some highly placed people who were antagonistic towards him while in power, were the surprised receivers of his largesse and kindness after losing their jobs or position. One could sum up this aspect of Lalaji's character by quoting a couplet:

"Nasha Pila Ke Girana Toh Sab Ko Aata Hai
Mazaa To Jab Hai Ki Girton Ko Thaam Le Saqi"
*(It may be easy to intoxicate a person and cause him to fall
However it is really rewarding to save a stumbling falling person ...)*

MAHENDRA KAUL, O.B.E.

I have been frequently visiting India including Kashmir, from abroad, which helped me to bring myself up to date with the activities of this fascinating man, Lala Tirath Ram.

As and when the activities of Lalaji related to Kashmir would become widely known, even people in authority in Delhi, apart from the general masses, will become aware of the role Lalaji played for decades to strengthen the foundation of secularism.

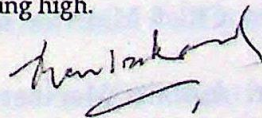
While the struggle for autonomy was on, there were times when even the great leader of Kashmir Shaikh Mohd. Abdullah, started having second thoughts about his nationalistic policies and considered turning National Conference back into Muslim Conference Programme. It was people like Mr. D. P. Dhar and several Hindu activists including Lala Tirath Ram who had stood by Shaikh Mohd. Abdullah, who convinced him that the step that he was planning to take would be a retrograde one and it would be damaging to the interests of not only the State of J&K but to the whole of India.

Shaikh Mohd Abdullah's shifting attitude had some justification because of the attitude of Kashmiri pandits who by and large, perhaps, because of the mistrust, stayed away from the main mass movement led by Shaikh Abdullah. Lala Tirath Ram Amla and his son Krishan Amla were both trying to convince the Kashmiri Hindus that they could not ensure their security and development by living in isolation - away from the majority Muslim community. I may mention here that even I was requested by Mr. Krishan Amla to visit Kashmir every year to persuade Kashmiri Pandits to change with the changing times and he even offered to bear all my expenses.

The role of Lala Tirath Ram was appreciated not only by the leadership of Delhi but also by progressive Kashmiri Muslim leaders like Mr. G. M. Sadiq in Kashmir who held the post of Chief Minister for a period of time.

As a member of Rajya Sabha for years Lalaji raised his voice to promote the cause of Kashmir. Back in Kashmir his role remained to ensure a stable government which enjoys the confidence of people. Lalaji's growth in stature enabled him to serve the interests of Kashmiris in particular and India in general.

One would like to think that Indian leadership, whichever party was in power, realised the role that Lalaji had played which was evidenced by the fact that on his 90th birthday celebrations at the India Habitat Centre, the entire central leadership of India including the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani and many Ministers, Members of Parliament and other dignitaries joined to felicitate this magnificent Indian who will keep the Parcham (Flag) of Kashmiriat flying high.



109 CLIVE COURT, MAIDAVALE, LONDON W9 1SF
TELEPHONE: 020 7286 8131 FAX: 020 7286 8866



Mangat Ram Sharma

DO NO:PS/HDCM/J&K/03/
Nov.12,2003

"TIRTH RAM AMLA"

Some people are born great, some acquire greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them. Shri Tirth Ram Amla acquired greatness through sheer dint of hard work and sincerity. He has reached the threshold of the achievements, where greatness has been thrust upon him. Shri Amla is a multifaceted personality and the greatest of his virtues is compassion for the people in general and the sufferers in particular. His wealth has not made him arrogant, but has enriched his generosity, kindness and sensitivity towards the suffering humanity.

Shri Tirth Ram Amla is an outstanding statesman and have remained very active in the political sphere of the State and the Country, right from early sixties. Shri G.M. Sadiq, the then Chief Minister of the State was instrumental in making Shri Amla a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha. Shri Amla reminisces fondly his first day in the Parliament which was



Mangat Ram Sharma

May 2nd 1967. Shri Amla had a very close proximity with Shri G.M. Sadiq and was an active leader of Democratic National Party. Later this stalwart joined Congress Party and developed very close political relations with the famous Prime Minister of India – Smt. Indira Gandhi. Shri Amla remained Member of Parliament for 21 years as Smt. Indira Gandhi desired him to work in that capacity, repeatedly.

Shri Amla has been extremely apt in handling men and matters. His political foresight and the capacity to anticipate the coming political events, is highly appreciable. He has been a great secularist, humanist and democrat in the true sense of the word. He has been extremely courageous politician and would never mince words while participating in discussions in the Rajya Sabha. He would not take low the challenges thrown on him and was very forthright in his statements when delivered in the Rajya Sabha. His intelligence and gravity of thought and performance is respected widely.



Mangat Ram Sharma

Shri Amla endeared one to all through his great benevolence and politeness. People from various walks of life always love to meet him and seek his guidance and advice on various affairs of life. He has always been a great performer and would never remain satisfied with low level of achievements. No doubt then that he could raise himself from ground level to the heights of prosperity, glory, fame and reputation. A Trust founded by him, namely "Tirth Ram Satya Devi Charitable Trust", has become a very effective instrument for helping the poor and the needy. The said Trust has a corpus of several crores of rupees and is doing a great missionary work for the poor and sufferers.

Shri Amla is in his nineties now and has taken to spiritualism after relinquishing the mundane pursuits of life. I am sure his constructive role rendered to the society and his political activism based on high principles and positive attitudes will be remembered by one to all for times to come. I wish him a good health and pray for his long life.

Mangat Ram Sharma
(Mangat Ram Sharma) 17/11/23
Dy. Chief Minister, J&K State.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed

Lala Tirath Ram is a quintessential part of the mystique of Kashmir. A man who is no ethnic Kashmiri perhaps, but who is no less than a son of the soil of the valley. Lalaji is woven into its fabric of intimate human contact that is so peculiar to places like ours. He is part of its political fables as much as he contributed to its social life, but I have marked Lalaji always for his boldness and courage.

My earliest impression of Lala Tirath Ram is of 1959, the days when I entered politics during the heyday of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. For me, fresh from Aligarh as a trained young lawyer and a master's degree in Arabic under the belt, the decision to join politics seemed strange, for good Government jobs were relatively easy to come. With my family background that would in any case have been more welcome at home. However, joining politics and that too through an opposition outfit was considered insane. I preferred to join the Democratic National Conference (DNC) rather than Bakshi's ruling National Conference that overwhelmed every sphere of the state's political and social life at that time.

In the DNC I found a rich repertoire of political timbre, intellectual authenticity and a yearning for change. The laid back, rather lazy but enlightened aristocracy of G M Sadiq, DP Dhar's political mastermind and Syed Mir Qasim's decency added up to a great combination for any political scenario but in the Kashmir of those times it was something akin to today's suicide strategy. And one man who provided the steel for the strength of this combination against the formidable resources of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, his government and undisputed levers of domination was Lala Tirath Ram. He displayed a no-holds-barred approach towards the government and the fighting abilities of the DNC, for whatever duration, received unstinted support from Lalaji. He stuck his neck out in situations where it was clearly hazardous to do so.

Lala Tirath Ram was a pillar of support for another revolt many years later, this time against Mr. G M Sadiq. He would again be the anti thesis of the conventional political wisdom of *saaf chhupte bhi nahin, samne aatey bhi nahin*. He openly sided with

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed

the group that wanted a change in the state leadership and having a business presence in Delhi, he provided the necessary logistical support to the rebels. For whatever reasons, the move failed but Lalaji never regretted his association with a losing side even though he had obviously wide business interests in the state, a consideration that generally would make someone else in his place more circumspect.

The old war horse of many political battles, however, kept his best performance for a late stage act that has earned him the admiration of all those who know him. He did not snap or perhaps think of doing so, his ties with Srinagar even when it looked like a Forbidden City for many of us. He never stopped coming here, staying here and meeting people. His Broadway hotel was one of the first to reopen and declare Kashmir's readiness to receive guests to the outside world. His feeling for the place definitely defied commercial sense at that point of time, but Lalaji's boldness once again showed the way.

LALA TIRATH RAM AMLA

It is often said that political friendships are convenient. Lalaji proved this to be utterly wrong. For me it has been an enduring friendship not only with him but also with his wife Satyawati^{D. J. J.}, that great lady, his life partner, whom I have never seen without a smile, a smile more affectionate than a dozen loving words. The friendship has continued not only with his children but with his grandchildren.

When I entered Parliament in 1980 he was already a veteran Parliamentarian having been a member for over 14 years. The initial period for a new member is usually a period of listening to other members in the Chamber and getting to know them personally. In Lala Tirath Ram Amla I found a spontaneously instantly warm person who was genuine with nothing superficial about him.

I learnt that he is a businessman and owner of several hotels by sheer chance a little later. I had gone to Srinagar for a Consultative Committee meeting of the Petroleum and Chemicals Ministry. We stayed at Broadway hotel. While I was having my breakfast at the swimming pool with Lovraj, one of India's best regarded civil servants, then the Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Chemicals, Lalaji walked up to me. I asked him what was he doing there. He told me that he was our host. I told him that the Parliament was paying for my bill and he should not bother. It was then that I learnt for the first time that he owned the lovely Broadway Hotel in

Srinagar. He never boasted of what he possessed though he willingly shared with others what he had.

1983 was an election year in Jammu & Kashmir. I regularly visited Srinagar both during the elections and after the elections. During my visits, Lalaji and I were together in many political meetings. The elections were followed by a host of legal battles taken up in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in which both my wife, Sunanda and I were involved. Living in Kashmir and visiting his home almost daily was an unavoidable pleasure for both of us.. This, of course, brought me close to every member of his family including his children and particularly grand-children. Invariably they would swim with me in the hotel pool in the evening and we had fun splashing water at each other and reciting stories and poems.

In Parliament, J&K has been a raging issue. Lalaji intervened in debates on Kashmir often. He was firmly against terrorists in J&K. He relentlessly asserted that the terrorists were holding the Valley to ransom. All the steps taken by the Congress Government did not yield the expected results of bringing down the proxy war or cross border terrorism.

His was the most vocal voice against terrorism. He realised that terrorism was the most serious threat to peace, democracy, human rights, security and development in Jammu and Kashmir. Whenever he spoke I never missed the opportunity to listen to him. He disclosed grassroot realities in Jammu & Kashmir. He always correctly predicted the upsurge and ebbing of terrorism. His occasional explanation was much to the discomfort of the Home Minister that terrorism fades during the month of Ramzan and

risers again after Idul Fitar, nothing really to do with the Government's efforts. He did not dissent. He spoke the truth. His speeches filled my heart as they spoke of patriotism coupled with humanity. Often I was the first to congratulate him. His speeches were really discomfoting to the ruling Congress Government of which we were members. This reflected how he put his duty to the nation even above party considerations. He would not allow terrorism to be wrapped under false and exaggerated statements. To quote his words: "the 'atankwadies' were holding the Valley to ransom and that their writ was running there and that their writ was being observed. I think, on this point, a member of the ruling party then in this House objected to it and said, "No we are very much in control of it. What you say is exaggerated". But subsequent events have proved that what I said on that day, to which my friends and my senior colleagues objected to was correct. Since then, all the calls for *bands*, all the commands of the extremists, are being observed very accurately. I would say, by most of the people in the Valley. Pakistan is not only training the Kashmiri youths but Pakistan is also supplying arms and ammunition. And very soon when this movement takes a little shape of mass movement the Pakistani soldiers, as in 1947, will jump into the arena and will create hell in Kashmir. This is the time when the Home Ministry must do something. Mere saying that things will take shape themselves will not help, wishful thinking will not help and closing eyes to events will not help; we must be realistic". He cautioned more correctly than any one else that the situation in Kashmir is going to be very very grave."

He was at his best when the Congress was in opposition in 1989 and terrorism reached a peak. It has not ebbed since then.

Even after our ceasing to be members of the Parliament our friendship continues. Neither conditions in the valley nor my mood permitted me to visit Srinagar after 1989. We occasionally meet and enjoy our meetings. Above all I admire my friend Lalaji for his great hobby of playing with his grand children which I am also enjoying today. For Satya and Lalaji the grand and great grand children are truly the world of joy.

My best wishes to Satya and Lalaji for scoring centuries and all the joy.

Tirath Ram Amla: A nationalist and a Statesman

Dr. Najma Heptulla

Deputy Chairperson, Rajya Sabha

Shri Tirath Ram Amla was a member of Rajya Sabha representing the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In fact, when I joined Rajya Sabha as a member in 1980, Shri Amla was already a very senior member having been elected to Rajya Sabha first in May 1967 thereafter in April 1970, April 1976 and then, again, in 1985. In 1982, when I was nominated to the panel of Vice-Chairmen, I had thought to informally interact with many senior members in the House and Shri Amla was one of them. Between January 1985 and January 1986 when I served as the Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, Shri Amla was one of the frequent visitors who used to come to my office in Parliament House. Even as partymen belonging to Congress (I), I had interacted with him a number of times during 1986-87 when I served as General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee (I).

Shri Amla's understanding of the problem of Jammu and Kashmir always impressed me. Shri Amla had his political base in the State of Jammu and Kashmir and had first hand knowledge of the public opinion on the problems of the State. In fact, he was

born at Muzaffarabad and had his education at the Government High School, Muzaffarabad and S.P. College, Srinagar. He had always remained very close to his roots. He always felt deeply for his people from the State and was eminently known for his secular credentials. I distinctly remember, in 1987, when Shri P. Chidambaram, Minister of State for Home Affairs was answering a question in the House, Shri Amla while putting his supplementary presented a prognosis of the communal situation that was about to arise in the State. While putting his supplementary question, Shri Amla informed the House:

Very often minorities – Hindus are directed through letters and through telephone – in fact, they are ordered to leave the place quietly. They have given them a date in July by which date they should leave the State. They have told them that they have no right to live there. No restaurant, tea stall or a dhaba can open according to the instructions of the extremists.

This statement of Shri Amla, in fact, surprised everyone.

Next day, the *Times of India* carried a prominent story in which the newspaper wrote:

A Congress M.P. Mr. Tirath Ram Amla, surprised the Rajya Sabha towards the end of Question Hour today when he disputed the version of the situation in Kashmir presented to the House by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. P. Chidambaram.

Speaking again in the House on the 16th August, 1989, Shri Amla said that when he spoke last time on the Jammu & Kashmir problem, his statement was opposed and he was told, "No we are very much in control of it. What you say is exaggerated." But subsequent turn of events proved that Shri Amla was right. Referring to what he said earlier and how prophetic it all was, Shri Amla said in the House:

But subsequent events have proved what I said on that day, to which my friends and my senior colleagues objected to was correct. Since then, all the calls for *bandh*, all the commands of the extremists, are being observed very accurately, I would say, by most of the people in the valley.

In the same speech Shri Amla made a fervent appeal to the Government to take effective steps to control the situation. He said:

This is the time when the Home Ministry must do something. Mere saying that things will take shape themselves will not help, wishful thinking will not help; we must be realistic.

He also used to speak in the House with same amount of authority with regard to the people living in the Leh region of Jammu and Kashmir as he knew that Ladhakhis for their ration and provisions depend entirely on Kashmir.

After his retirement from Rajya Sabha, Shri Amla again got active in political and social circles of the State of Jammu & Kashmir and devoted himself a great deal on social work. At this age of 90 years, Shri Amla is still active and working for his people.

I wish Shri Amla a long and active social life. We need persons like Shri Amla who not only know about a problem but also can present a decisive solution to that problem.

N. Heptulla

Naqushbund G.
I.F.S. (Retd.)



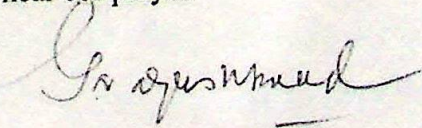
Denmark
March 28, 2005

Some years ago when I was about to take leave of Tirathji and I was not in good form of health and depressed, I said let us hope we meet again next year, he cut me short and said why say so; InshaAllah we will meet again and again for many years. It indeed gave me great strength and thank God we, ever since, met twice or thrice in good mood and form.

This year as his admirers, friends and well wishers are celebrating his birthday I send my greetings and good wishes. We have known each other now for nearly sixty years (or more) and am one among many many admirers of his. "Love is not times fool" and friends loved him in the past, friends love him now and Inshallah will love him in years to come. May Allah grace us with celebrating his 100th birthday at the appropriate time in an appropriate manner.

To his friends, he is dear Tirathji and to many many Chacha. His constituency is vast and without any canvassing all will vote for him.

May he live long and happy and may these sincere good wishes from a far off land reach him in good form and grace. May Allah hear our prayer.


(G. NAQUSHBUND)

BIOGRAPHY

Lala Tirath Ram popularly known among His admirers as 'PAPAJI' is in the true sense a PAPAJI to most of us. He has been more than a father to me and my family and we have always respected and loved him as one. He possesses a soft heart, with concerns for everyone's welfare and I vividly still remember the day when in 1995 I was admitted in Escorts Hearts Institute for an angio plastic surgery. Probably due to some tiredness and exhaustion I had fallen asleep and suddenly I felt very soft but a loving hand stroking my hair. I casually opened my eyes and I noticed PAPAJI with his eyes shut, deep in his thoughts, with his lips murmuring something not audible to me, stroking my hair with one hand and firmly holding my right hand with his other hand. I kept on looking at this Holy and fatherly figure by my bed-side and suddenly he opened his eyes looking at me with tremendous affection and love. I found his eyes moist with tears and his lips engaged in praying for me.

He looked at me and determinedly expressed that all is going to be well and that HIS Devimaa has promised to take care of me. I smiled back at him and he bent down to caress my forehead and transferred his entire warmth and love into my body. This reminded me of the similar incident when my father, late Haji Sahib sat beside me holding my one hand and caressing my hair with other during my surgery at AIMS in 1978. With PAPAJI sitting beside, I did not miss Haji Sahib at this moment.

It was only later when Kiran and Kumar – daughter and son-in-law of PAPAJI explained to me whenever Papaji is concerned for someone he loves, he invokes the blessings of His Devimaa and he generally goes into trance to do something good to his loved ones. I was completely moved by this gesture and felt proud to be one among the loved ones of PAPAJI

Very few people would inflict the pain of meditation to themselves for the betterment and well being of others. Yet I know PAPAJI would always evoke the blessings of his Devimaa for not only his loved ones but for others as well.

The concern for the welfare of people is so great in this son of the soil that when people who migrated from Srinagar due to turmoil of 90s and would hold small or big grudge against the majority community of Kashmir, PAPAJI would spend a lot of time with me in enquiring about the welfare of his Muslim staff and their families in Srinagar. At many a times he even extended cash assistance to them directly or through people like me. His deep concern about the welfare of every Kashmiri irrespective of caste, creed and religion is so profound and deep that at many occasions he would console us and give hope and repeatedly say '*Insha Allah, Sab theek hoga*'

PAPAJI is a multifaced personality known all over the country and in the Valley as a good businessman. Some of us, who know him closely, know him as a man with a Golden Heart and a prayer on his lips for the betterment of humanity.

I met Tirath Ramji, as I have always respectfully addressed him, for the first time once casually during the time of the theft of the Sacred Relic (Mue-e-muqqaddas) in 1964. I had gone to Srinagar as a Joint Secretary in the Home Ministry along with Home Secretary V.Vishwanathan, Intelligence Bureau Director B.N.Malik and some other colleagues. This was only a brief meeting but I could see how Tirath Ramji was held in very high regard by everyone around him.

My next social contact with him was in 1967 when I became Chief Secretary under Chief Minister Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq. As I met him more in the company of Sadiq Sahib and the suave diplomatist D.P.Dhar, the acquaintance developed into regard born out of my close observation of the friendly, humane and modest man that Tirath Ramji was. I could see quite clearly that he had been deeply involved in the political process and yet showed little outward signs of it. I also saw that though in an important business himself - I heard he had developed it virtually single handed - there too there was no outward sign of the affluence, nor any show of the influence he so obviously wielded.

During my four years as Chief Secretary, I developed great regard and affection for Tirath Ramji. I saw his open and friendly nature, his great understanding of problems of Jammu and Kashmir and the scrupulousness with which he approached Sadiq Sahib for the resolution of any difficulties he had in his business. I came to know

his wonderful family and saw how deeply he felt for his wife Smt. Satya Deviji whom he associated in all functions and how lovingly he treated all his children.

While Tirath Ramji was a respected friend, I must confess that like everyone else in Kashmir, as Chief Secretary I found it best not to appear too close to anyone. I observed the political climate of Kashmir and the quiet but important role that Tirath Ramji had in it, but I had no occasion to remark upon on it to anyone except perhaps the Union Home Secretary, Shri L.P.Singh.

Indeed, I did not know for some time that he was a member of Parliament. It was only later that I learnt about the great part he had played in bringing about a political reconciliation between Indira Gandhi and the embittered Sheikh Abdullah. His role in discerning the dangers inherent in the laissez-faire policies of the Government of India was a bold and courageous contribution he made to deflect the Government of India from a course of action he considered nationally damaging. The prophetic warnings he gave in Parliament about the alienation spreading in Kashmir and the part that Pakistan was beginning to play created a sensation at the time. That his warnings went unheeded, hastened the tragedy of the good people of the Valley. The country has suffered a great deal since then and one may only hope for an early resolution after the recent free and fair elections in the State and the peace moves of the Indian Prime Minister.

When I returned from Kashmir back to the Government of India, I had taken some leave and with a family of four plus a dog, it was not convenient to impose myself on the limited accommodation

that my close friends were living in. At that point, Tirath Ramji came himself to say that his M.P's quarter in South Avenue was vacant and though very small, I may find it useful to park myself in till I got my appointment in the government. I was very glad to accept this offer and stayed there for a few weeks gratefully, till I became Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and shifted to a house on Pandara Road. It was characteristic of Tirath Ramji, quietly to give assistance to a person he saw in difficulty; he did not ever make out that he was doing a favour. The same kindness I received from him when I retired from service and returned from Belgium with nowhere to live in. I stayed for a couple of weeks at the Bharat Petroleum guest house but obviously I was a little embarrassed doing so. Tirath Ramji came one morning and asked me to accompany him. He showed me some vacant tenements in his possession and said he would be glad to place any one of them at my disposal. Again, I stayed in his accommodation for a couple of months till I rented my own residence in Gulmohar Park. Such kindness to a person who had retired from service came naturally to Tirath Ramji out of his innate goodness and fellow feeling.

I had known of Tirath Ramji's humanity, helpfulness to the needy for many years. But his great philanthropy and the notable contributions to charity both directly and through the Charitable Trust established by him came to my knowledge only in recent years. Significantly, he himself did not talk about these matters out of his characteristic modesty. I was doubly impressed by the great and multi-faceted personality of Tirath Ramji.

Our close friendship with Tirath Ramji, the ever gracious Satya Deviji and their closely knit family has continued now for over 30 years. When I became the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, among those who genuinely rejoiced with my family was Tirath Ramji.

When he celebrated his 90th birthday a few months back, my wife and I had the good fortune of felicitating him and Satya Deviji. We also saw the great regard in which he was held by the highest in the land. In the evening of his life Tirath Ramji leads an ascetic life, detached yet involved with family and friends, ever gracious, considerate and helpful. We, my wife and I and my whole family wish him a long, happy and peaceful life.

There are examples galore of persons with humble beginnings having made it to the summit of business and trade.

Some of them, having identified with the freedom struggle, gained top most positions. Almost all of them adhered to one or the other strain of political thought, for example Birla with Mahatma Gandhi, Goenka with JP and others.

Lala Tirath Ram Amla, Lalaji to his friends, could be categorized as one such businessman, who made it to the top of the ladder from humble beginnings in the backwaters of the Valley of Kashmir.

Disarming in style, a wistful smile with keen eyes, Lalaji is neither pedantic nor scholastic. A pragmatic in his relationships, he is down to earth in handling assignments, whether political or those concerning his business. With high business acumen, Lalaji not only survived the turbid and ill winds of the hot-house of politics in Jammu & Kashmir, but successfully played multiple roles - a parliamentarian, politician and a mediator, while maintaining his interest in business and trade as his first love. As the years rolled by and Lalaji got increasingly involved in political activity, his business graph also rose markedly, making others in his trade envious of his success. His adversaries spared no effort to catch him on the wrong foot, but however much they tried, they failed to prove him wrong or undermine his role as a pre-eminent businessman of the state. Lalaji, not adept at combining business windfalls with his political choices did not negotiate his successes in life with opportunist bargains. In his case it was the other way around. Constantly under siege for being on the wrong side of the political barricade in the state, his sheer survival as a successful businessman-politician was no mean an achievement. But he excelled. Today he has his hands full in hospitality industry, automobiles, Cinema and real estate business.

My first acquaintance of Lalaji goes back to early forties when he

was courting his bride-to-be at Chitranar near the lake township of Bandipur north-west of Kashmir. I had gone to Chitranar on a brief visit to see my uncle Mr. Prakash Kaul Jalali, who was an Accountant working under the future father-in-law of Lalaji.

The office-cum-residential complex of Chitranar nestling in the breath-taking scenic beauty and over-looking famous Wular Lake, was all astir as rumour went on that a young man from Muzaffarabad had come to ask for the hand of Satya, the beautiful but physically challenged daughter of the Divisional Forest Officer. In the cluster of small but daintly green coloured huts covered by thick jungle that formed the forest office and the residential area, the presence of young man from Muzaffarabad had fired the imagination of all from lowly Chaprasi to highest in the local Forest Office.

Least did I know that a decade or so after I would meet the same "Muzaffarabadi" boy, but this time in a new incarnation acting to bale out a group of leftist political activists involved in a critical rescue mission to save a lady artist from Kanpur from falling in to the clutches of a gang of hoodlums led by a younger brother of the state's Home Minister. The artist was the guest of Progressive Artists Association and was lodged in a hotel in the fashionable Residency Road area of Srinagar. The hoodlums swooped into her room at the dead of night threatening of dire consequences if she resisted their attempt at kidnapping her. They attacked the hotel proprietor who vainly pleaded with them to leave the artist alone. Helpless at warding off the hoodlums the hotel manager sought police help, which understandably failed to materialize. Disappointed, he sent a message to late Som Nath Bhat, the renowned Kashmiri Artist to intervene and save the woman in distress. It was as a member of Bhat's team that I got involved in the rescue act.

Together we contacted D.P. Dhar, who was the State's Home

Secretary then, to seek his intervention and persuade the hoodlums to lift the siege around the hotel. Even his persuasive efforts failed to yield the results. After a night long vigil, we finally arrived at an agreement under which the lady Artist was allowed to leave the hotel unscathed to keep her engagement with a group of writers and artists in the nearby township of Sopore next morning. But how to reach Sopore. A bus journey was risky. The alternative was to engage a taxi with a trustworthy driver who could face the hoodlums and dodge them if they played the mischief again. While, we were discussing the subject with no light at the end of tunnel a well-built taxi driver contacted us saying he had been deputed by 'Lalaji' to take the lady artist to Sopore. Suspecting the offer to be yet another trap of the hoodlums, we went by DP's advice, who removed our misapprehensions saying that the offer was from one of his businessman friends who wanted to make his 'humble contribution', in resisting the political high-handedness. It was no ordinary offer for a businessman in Kashmir volunteering to resist the high profile hoodlums, who were a law unto themselves, and cared little about human decency or decorum in public life. Lalaji's was no ordinary decision, as it involved high risks.

The ink on the kidnapping episode had yet to dry than another scam involving three elder brothers of the top most in the ruling hierarchy burst into the open. It came to be known as "Muddy Shali" case comprised clandestine sale of 62000 mounds of food grains stolen from the state owned food grains stores and sold at an exorbitant price at a time when near about famine conditions prevailed because of acute shortage of food grains in the Valley. As soon as our group in the National Conference came to know about this clandestine sale we decided to expose the fraudulent act and mobilize public opinion to demand a probe, notwithstanding the fact that it meant directly confronting the most powerful in the state. We borrowed a newspaper called "Nai Lahar" from a

friendly journalist to bring out a special edition to expose the sale. Bringing out a special edition was beyond our means since we were starved of funds. Besides the printing had to be done quietly in strict secrecy without inviting the attention of the authorities, the police or the ruling party hoodlums who were on the prowl to suppress any opposition activity.

After careful deliberations the choice fell on Lalaji who had by now been listed by our group as sympathetic source for help. I remember locating him near the same hotel on the Residency Road with my two other colleagues, Haroon and Khanda to ask for financial help. The response was quick with Lalaji enquiring the amount of money we needed. After a few calculations we asked for a princely sum of Rs.150 and Lalaji promptly gave it to us. Next morning the first copy of the special edition containing the exposure was in the hands of Lalaji himself. The disclosures made in "Nai Lahar" created a furore and the edition sold like hot cakes. Despite our secrecy, we found that authorities knew that Lalaji had paid for bringing out the special edition of the paper.

Lalaji's tendency to stand by those who fought injustice and stood against official high-handedness came into full play with the split in ruling National Conference in 1957 when an influential section of its leadership led by late Mr. G.M. Sadiq resigned and formed Democratic National Conference. Supported by late D.P. Dhar and Syed Mir Qasim the new party exposed corruption in high places and fought for democratic rights, which were under attack of the ruling faction headed by Bakshi Gulam Mohammed. Jawaharlal Nehru who decried the split publicly opposed the formation of Democratic National Conference describing the step as hundred percent wrong. Faced with Panditji's censor, several influential persons who had proposed to support the new party backed away. But not so Lalaji who boldly and publicly came to the rescue of DNC leaders by liberally financing the activities of the party and its leaders.

No sooner had the opposition DNC come into being than it faced the onslaught of the ruling party leaders. Physical attacks on its cadres and also the leaders became order of the day. When physical torture did not pay the dividends, the ruling hierarchy applied the economic pressure in a bid to deprive the important functionaries of the party of their livelihood. One such functionary was late Mir Lasjan who ran a number of brick kilns. The Government forced their closure forcing Mr. Lasjan to opt for truce. The way out of the difficult situation was to arrange for alternate source of investment in the kilns. Lalaji came forward and arranged the funds and the guarantee for Mr. Lasjan, who spurned the choice to succumb before the ruling hierarchy.

Under heavy pressure of the Government led by Bakshi Gulam Mohammed, almost all the leaders felt heavily strained. Their relations were harassed, and if they were serving the Government demoted or transferred to far away places. Their friends in business and trade also faced the axe of the hostile administration, in case they tendered for Government auctions. Faced with this situation they were always in need of financial help, which invariably came from Lalaji. In fact it was known to all that almost all the senior leaders of the DNC received liberal financial help from Lalaji to tide over the difficult situation and face the constraints. The monthly household expenditure of the two DNC leaders was being paid by Lalaji, not merely as a measure of his generosity but as a necessity to keep the democratic opposition going and to resist the authoritarian rule. As long as Democratic National Conference performed the opposition role, Lalaji was its sheet anchor not hesitating to finance its activities.

The Democratic National Conference and its leaders were not the only ones who received support and financial backing from Lalaji. Unmindful of how the rulers might interpret his friendly connections with some of the stalwart leaders of the state, Lalaji

stood by his friends when they needed him most while others had abandoned them. Once such friend was Mirza Afzal Beig who had defected to the secessionist camp and was in jail. His wife took seriously ill and there were few who came forth for medical help. The choice fell on Lalaji. As a trusted friend of the family he promptly arranged the medical aid and openly organized the help for the ailing lady. This was deeply resented by the authorities, especially Lalaji's ministerial friends who feared that the gesture might compromise their position and create suspicion about their loyalty to the Government. Lalaji made it clear that while he sharply differed with Mr. Beig's political choices, his friendship with the family will remain undiminished.

In fact the streak of defiance was visible in Lalaji's personality right from the early days. Soon after the Pakistani tribal attack on the state in 1947, many who belonged to the other side of the ceasefire line got stranded in Kashmir Valley and wanted to go home. One of them was a friend of Lalaji who hailed from Muzaffarabad. Moved by his condition, Lalaji took the risk of arranging his travel to Pak Occupied Kashmir capital on the other side of the ceasefire line. DP Dhar who looked after the home affairs in the Government came to know of it and strongly objected to Lalaji's "indiscretion". Accepting that he had committed the indiscretion Lalaji pleaded that he had done a service to a friend by returning him to his home. The matter was sorted out amicably.

Lalaji's entry into trade and business commenced with a contract lease of a forest in Baramulla. The venture coincided almost with the emergency enforced on the state in the wake of Pak backed tribal raid, which destroyed state's fragile economic setup. The attainment of freedom and the defeat of Pakistani raid had aroused great popular expectations only to be belied under new dispensation, which was dominated by a coterie of brothers who wielded effective power and became sole arbiters of everybody's fate who stood in the way. The sad but heart breaking

phenomenon erupted at the very dawn of popular rule. The emergency rule degenerated into a Peronist style set up which became the political culture of the state. Anyone aspiring to survive in the state's trade and commerce had to play a second fiddle role and subordinate his/her interest to this coterie.

The emergence of notorious Peace Brigade, nicknamed "Kuntreh Pandah" (Twenty nine and fifteen) belongs to this period. The Peace Brigade could be compared to Praetorian Guards, whose Kashmiri variant performed no different role. Under these conditions it was no mean achievement to have escaped the axe of the brothers' coterie and grow as a successful businessman. One can say with confidence that Lalaji is among the rarest of rare businessman entrepreneur who did not subordinate his business advantages to his political choices and succumb to the dictates of the coterie. When he should have been nearer the throne, he positioned himself in the opposition, ready to put his resources at the disposal of those who fought the Government.

Not that his first forest lease proceeded without impediments. The Forest Minister falsely charged him with violating the terms of lease by felling unauthorized trees. A number of high-level enquiries were instituted. But sure of his fair dealings, Lalaji stood his ground firmly. Much to the discomfiture of the Minister, the charges proved to be false and baseless.

Jammu & Kashmir has an entertaining gallery of the corrupt, crooks and scoundrels, whose scams and scandals will beat any Al-Capone anywhere. The ugly phenomenon did not appear overnight. Every petty official seemed to have ganged up with his political counterpart in the ruling hierarchy who exercise arbitrary powers without any accountability. Kashmir valley in particular saw the emergence of small time tyrants. The National Conference which courageously fought the autocracy, overnight became an institution of tyranny. Businessmen in order to

survive had to swear allegiance to these overlords or face elimination. It was no surprise if you came across a "Halqa" activists carrying blank arrest warrant signed by the colluding members of the magistracy to blackmail affluent citizen. It would be worth examining how Lalaji escaped the clutches of these tyrants who turned businessman into their henchmen and used them as crutches to replace them in the trade as new style entrepreneurs.

Unraveling many layers of the life of Lalaji, rich with several achievements, would be a fascinating essay for anyone examining persons of merit who make a success of business and politics with an adversarial role. He has already left behind ninety summers, full of rich dividends, as also disappointments and perhaps failures, too. Flash backs into his past reveal no dramatic or spectacular events. He has the knack of reducing every thing to a commonplace event. Take for instance, his mediatory role in clenching the deal between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah resulting in the Kashmir Accord of 1975.

While, the nation's attention was focused on Beig Parthasarthy discussions, Lalaji, away from the gaze of media, was shuttling between Mrs. Gandhi's residence and the Sheikh lodged at Kotla Lane in Delhi, keeping the two in constant touch with each other, to ensure their interlocutors did not leave their task half finished without a success.

While Beig and Parthasarthy were exchanging ideas, Lalaji was carrying the Sheikh's reactions to Indiraji and vice-versa. This went on till the discussions reached a culminating point in an agreement between the two sides.

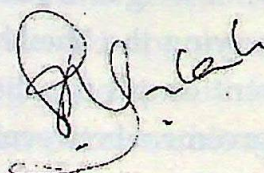
Lalaji takes his own decisions and makes political choices on their merit, uninfluenced by others. His decision to throw his lot behind G.M. Shah in toppling the Government of his brother-in-

law, Dr. Farooq Abdulla, was a step he did not regret. On the fateful day when Mr. Shah gathered his legislators to parade them before the Governor, Lalaji, unmindful of the consequences, opened the doors of his bungalow at Sonwar to shelter them.

In the course of his long stint in the Parliament, Lalaji raised his voice on important public issues, and at times by rising above the partisan and narrow party interest. He startled the Treasury benches in 1988, when he questioned the truthfulness of Home Minister's statement claiming that the Pak sponsored terrorist campaign in the Valley was being exaggerated. Lalaji strongly contested the Home Minister's statement and stood his ground firmly, even though the party did not approve of his intervention. In bringing back stability and peace to strife ridden Kashmir, Lalaji has campaigned across the party division and works for national consensus on the issue.

Despite at times displaying a rough exterior, Lalaji has been affectionate and generous to his friends. His decades long friendship with late D.P. Dhar, who rode like a collasus on the diplomatic and political space of the country was very rare. It is for their friendship rather than kinship that their close relationship will be remembered.

A remarkable aspect of Lalaji's multi-dimensional personality is his deep love for Kashmir and Kashmiris.



25/12/04

Lala Tirath Ram Amla, "Chacha" as he is popularly known to his myriad of friends, is perhaps one of the outstanding success stories of our beautiful state of Kashmir. Born in Muzzafarbad in pre-partition Kashmir in a salt-of-the-earth farming family, he lost his mother at an early age and was thus set on the path of self-reliance which became his hallmark in later life. It was while studying in college in Srinagar that he came into contact with my late father SONAM NARBOO, also then a student there. This blossomed into a friendship which endured over five decades till my fathers death in 1980. This friendship which was to bond them into a closer relationship than biological brotherhood could have endowed, gave me the opportunity to know Tirath uncle from as far back as my memory can carry me. In retrospect, it was the shared qualities of head and heart that drew these two people together and shot them to the heights that they both attained. Tirath Uncle is a man who has always met life head-on and accepted whatever has been thrown at him as a challenge. It has been a life in which he has hob-nobbed with the high and mighty of the land and yet has not hesitated in parting ways with them when he has had a difference of opinion with them even though knowing that they could harm his vast business interests. It was this courage of his convictions which enabled him to earn for himself a seat in the RAJYA SABHA for 4 terms and become one of the most trusted confidantes of Madam Indira Gandhi in our region of J&K. The wise and mature advice that she could always rely upon from him was one of the reasons why Kashmir remained stable for as long as it did. The rest, as we know, is history.

As a successful businessman, Tirath Uncle has come in for more than his fair-share of jealousy and criticism, but it is also a known fact that there are no cases of mal-practice, corruption or scandals linked to him. This speaks volumes for his character and integrity. To carry on business in an area like J&K and be politically active at the same time calls for standing of the highest order and this is amply demonstrated by the love and affection he has received from his many friends, both Hindus and Muslims.

A man of great humour, full of zest for life, it is always a pleasure to be in his presence. The phrase 'larger than life' could have been coined for him. Among my earliest memories of him are his walking across to our house from his adjoining one in Raj Bagh Srinagar booming out my father's name on an early spring morning and then the usual banter and leg-pulling that the two would indulge in. Tirath Uncle's dining table was never complete without a dozen people at least eating on it. And the delicious food was personally ladled out by him to friends and relatives with choice morsels, singled out for us children. He enjoyed eating good food as much as he enjoyed seeing others eat it. His outlook on life has always been "what will he give to others whom God has given nothing, only he can give to whom god has given".

Without a word about Satya Auntie the above few lines would be totally inadequate. Though born handicapped she was destined to marry Tirath Uncle. This was a marriage made in heaven and nourished and blossomed on earth in the love and affection that Tirath Uncle showered upon her. As children, we would often unknowingly or uncaringly mimic, lame or otherwise handicapped people and could see the pain on uncle's face and he would gently make us understand that this was cruel and unseemly behaviour. To this day, the care and affection he gives her is exemplary.

April 19, 2005.

Papaji and my father have been friends for as long as I remember, perhaps now for five decades. My father was a very busy professional and had very little time for holidays. One of the fondest memories I have of Papaji is when he would casually drop into our house just after the start of my school's summer vacations. He would pack all of us and take us to his home in Srinagar. He would my father give the option of joining us whenever he could, during this two-month vacation period. In Srinagar, we were part of a large family of his children and lots of others like us. Till now, our bonds of friendship with his children and children of all other families of Papaji's friends remain strong and vibrant.

Another incident, which has left an indelible impression on my psyche, was around the time, I was about to get married. My father had fallen very ill and Papaji used to come over ever so often to look him up. One day he took me aside and gave me gyan. He said, "You are about to embark on a new relationship, which would during the course of time, be as dear to you as your parents are. You should treat your family of in-laws with respect, humility and love and if you do that, then it would be reciprocated in double the measure and would lay down the foundation of a happy married life." Till date his advise rings clear in my mind. I followed his advise and have been a happy man since.

Pradeep Dinodia
I.L.B. F.C.A.
Chartered Accountant

A-91, Maharani Bagh,
New Delhi - 110 065
Ph : 91-11-26839478

S. R. Dinodia & Co.
Chartered Accountants
K-39, Connaught Circus
New Delhi - 110 001
Ph : 91-11- 23416514
23416157
51513515
Fax : 91-11- 51513666

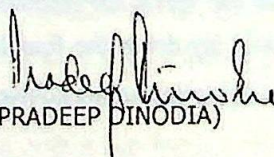
April 19, 2005.

Papaji's devotion to Mata Vaishno Devi is well known. People from all segments of society who walk in the Central Park, Maharani Bagh, greet Papaji with the "Jai Mata Di" salutation. He blesses all of them and sometimes on special occasions gives them, a framed photograph of "Ma Vaishno Devi". He seeks her benedictions for relieving the problems of all those who come in contact with him. He is a giving man with a big heart - a philanthropist. Everyone who knows him is touched by his generosity, love and kindness.

Papaji is my family beyond blood ties. I am indeed blessed to have him as a father figure. someone who has always there for me in times of joy and, more so, in times of sorrow. His blessings have always meant a lot to me and have deeply touched all realms of my life.

note-3 send

Yours sincerely,


(PRADEEP DINODIA)

L.Tirath Ram Amla,
F-3 Maharani Bagh,
NEW DELHI-110065.

Encl. As above.

Shri Tirath Ram Amla is affectionately known as **Lalaji** – hence in my reference I will mention here as “**Lalaji**” for us he is our dearest “**Chacha**”.

I first met Lalaji in 1950. This meeting flourished into a very close relationship. He has been a pillar of strength to me in all my problems as and when they arose.

BUSINESS ACTIVITIES :

He showed a lot of for sight and from Tourist business, he gradually diversified into the fields. He secured dealership of **Premier Automobiles** for **Fiat Cars Mahindra & Mahindra** for Jeep, Bajaj for two & three wheelers, **Escorts for Tractors** and earth moving machinery, Today for all their Furniture, Refrigerators, Type Writers, Security Equipment for Banks, Locks etc. Escorts sister concern for Niki Tasha Gas Stores, Television and Washing Machine. Then came Maruti Car in his Ford. All these for J&K. Then Hindustan Motors for Dehradun. Besides this he had contract for transporting Cement from Pathankot to Banihal for Jawahar Tunnel Construction. He got into partnership in N.D. Radha Krishen & Co., Northern Railway _____ later on Hotel Business took his fancy and he constructed a hotel in Delhi, first of its kind of offer “**Bed and Breakfast**” facility. Having succeeded in Delhi he put up a hotel in Srinagar first in Kashmir with a swimming pool and central heating. A modern Cinema hall was also his venture. All the activities were housed in his own property which he built as and when there venture came into his Fold.

He had his own knock of doing all this. He always cultivated personal relationship. **Seth Lal Chand of Premier Automobiles, Harish Mahindra of Mahindra & Mahindra, N.P. Godrej of Godrej** became his personal friends. For the conduct of business he would lay down broad plans and leave the rest to the staff running the various concerns. He would trust them completely but would keep an eye on the organizations. He built a Cinema hall in Srinagar, Automobile Complex in Duagavas, Hotel on Moulana Azad Road, office and showroom complex for Godrej in Maisooma, hotel on Asif Ali Road, New Delhi. He built various hiring complexes for his own use and for his family members. In all the building projects I played quite a role under his guidance. He always reposed complete faith and confidence in me.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES & RELATIONSHIPS :

At the time of partition of the country large members of his family relatives were in Muzaffarabad, now in Pakistan. On their return to India he took great pains to rehabilitate everyone of them by absorbing them in his own venture, educating the young ones and looking after their various needs till they were properly settled. To help others has been his character all along.

He was deeply involved in lok policies on **Congress** plank. He was member of **Raj Sabha for 4 consecutive terms** and rendered his services quality. Even in policies his friendship was constant whether the person was in known or out of power. A rare quality.

PERSONAL :

He has been a person who has always been a great help to me and my family. Here are a few of these.

1. In 1956 I terminated my interest in a joint business with my brother. I started my own venture for an office, he gave me a space in his own office with use of his telephone, till I was able to arrange my own.
2. In 1960 we sold our family house. He gave me the facility of the use of his flat in Poloview where I lived for a year till my own house in Ram Munshi Bagh was ready.
3. He gave his house for use in Jammu for the wedding of my daughter Renu. My daughter Anjali got married in his house on Himayun Road, New Delhi. The youngest daughter Geeta got married in his nephew's house in Bangalore.
4. He came to Bangalore when I had cardiac problem and stayed till I was out of woods.
5. After I moved to Bangalore we both came to Srinagar every year till the militancy started here. We were always his guests.
6. After we moved to Bangalore he came unammensed first to see and satisfy himself as to how I was having a new life in a place where I was a total stranger. He was quite satisfied.

This shows his concern for me.

Recently, his 90th Birthday was celebrated. His popularity can be gazed from the fact that all the who's who in policies, business and social circles responded positively and made it a grand celebrations..

His self confidence and conviction can be measured by the fact that inspite of all opposition he married a handicapped girl whom he had liked. The looking after, respect and regard given to her by him and his family can be anybody's entry. He has no complexes about her disability and takes her to all social functions with pride.

He is one person who is worth his weight in gold and a very true friend.

220 Sector 15A,
Noida.
16th August 2004

Dear

Ramji,

Writing about a person who has become a legend in his life time, and who is the recipient of the highest respect from leaders in all walks of Indian life, is no easy task. This is especially true for me, who first had the privilege of meeting Lalaji when I was a mere civil servant working in J&K while he was already an institution. I was posted out of Jammu and Kashmir in 1973 to Ministries in Delhi where I had no opportunity of meeting him. However, I was fortunate that I could revive my association with him after I joined Maruti, and Lalaji decided that he would like to represent us in Jammu and Kashmir. He had been a Premier Automobile dealer for a long time, and was very successful in the State. When we discussed the Maruti dealership, I pointed out that our policy did not permit a person to have a dealership of a competing product. Lalaji was quick to appreciate this and gave up the Premier dealership. Lala Bhim Singh Soi was entrusted with running the Jammu dealership and it worked very successfully. I remained closely in touch with Lalaji because of this link. Even after I retired in 1997, Lalaji maintained contacts and we would meet occasionally. He was a very considerate host and his hospitality has been enjoyed by so many.

Perhaps the most outstanding quality of Lalaji is his absolute humility. No one could have grudged him pride in his achievements as a self made highly successful industrialist and business man, a very important political figure and a person who was consulted by the highest in the country. Despite being a senior Member of Parliament, he never let this fact intrude in any business or social relationships. This quality led to persons he met being relaxed and not overawed by Lalaji. He always had a very open mind and was willing to accept suggestions for change and improvements. He appreciated that Maruti was trying to change the way cars were sold and serviced, compared to the practices which had existed for many decades. This was no easy task, especially because during the first decade of Maruti there was a considerable gap between the demand and supply of Maruti cars. Dealers functioned in a near monopoly situation. Nevertheless, it was to the credit of Lalaji that he fully cooperated in every way with our policies. I believe one of his regrets was that he could not get any family member to really get involved in running the dealership. With age, his own ability to supervise business declined and ultimately he gave up the dealership a few years ago.

The unfortunate developments in Kashmir caused considerable distress as well as financial loss to Lalaji. However, it never affected his positive attitude to life and his belief that in the end God would put everything right. He never had a bad word for any one though it was not difficult to sense the anguish he felt at the incompetence and insensitiveness of many in high positions.

220 Sector 15A,
Noida.
16th August 2004

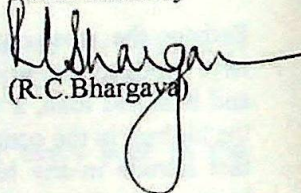
Lalaji has always showed great affection to me and would at times seek my advice on various issues. It was during one of these meetings that I suggested he may like to consider funding a Trust with some of his properties, and utilizing the income of the Trust to carry out works near to his heart. Lalaji did create this Trust and I believe this a manifestation of his philanthropic nature. He was always a 'giving' person. Some time ago he told me that the working of the Trust was giving him great satisfaction.

Lalaji has of course contributed enormously to the industrial as well as political development of J&K. Equally important has been the example he has set to younger people on how to lead a 'good' life and how to balance material success with the highest qualities of humility, consideration for others and backing ones beliefs and ideas with action. I feel very lucky that I could know him for the last over 30 years. I pray that God grants him many more years of healthy and active life.

Best regards.

Mr. Rohit Khattar,
Broadway Hotel,
Delhi.

Yours sincerely


(R.C. Bhargava)

Shri Tirath Ram Amla is referred to as Lala Ji or the Grand Old Man of Kashmir among his large circle of friends and relatives. This is not because of his vintage as such but because he is held by them in great esteem.

His huge success in business and public life is well known but what has impressed me most about him is his humility, concern for others, and keenness and readiness to help. While he never reminds you, even vaguely or remotely, of the favours done to you by him, he never forgets a favour done to him by others. May be that is one secret of his success.

Lala Ji has been an important player in the contemporary history of Jammu and Kashmir. I wish some enterprising scribe were to record his impressions and views about events in the last 50 years and experience of his close encounters with leaders of different political parties. Given his flair for narration and the news value of the leaders and the events as such, his memoirs will make an interesting reading and be a major contribution to the political history of Jammu and Kashmir.

My childhood friend Shri.Tirath Ram Amla is writing his biography and he desired that I should scribble a small note reminiscing our days spent in playing in the streets of Muzzafarabad and something about his life at S.P.College hostel at Srinagar.

I was born in May 1916 and T.R was a year or two senior to me in age but was a year junior at school. Muzzafarabad though a District Headquarter was a small town having a population of about 5500 in 1910-20. It only had a Middle school which was upgraded to a High school in 1928. I was among the first batch that passed Matriculation in 1930 and joined S.P.College Srinagar.

Ragging was a regular feature while welcoming freshers in the hostel. I will narrate two instances which amuse me till today. When T.R joined college in 1931 I was among the Seniors then but still the youngest boy in the hostel. One of T.R.'s room mate was a big burly fellow who sometimes dared to challenge the seniors and needed to be taught a lesson. I brought an Auger (hand drill) from the college Carpenter and drilled a hole in the wooden floor exactly over the bed of this boy who was on the ground floor. The freshers invariably locked their rooms when they went out. Next day when these boys were away to the market I emptied a bucket full of water through this small hole and his bed was fully drenched in water. All the four boys were furious when they returned to their room and saw the condition of the bed. They came and put me on top of an cupboard, seeing that my prank had boomeranged we made peace with T.R and party.

The second incident relates to a fresher who used to snore heavily. Our hostel was very close to the college building. One early morning with the connivance of his room mates a few seniors lifted his bed when he was fast asleep and very gently and smoothly carried it to the entrance porch of the college. It was summer and classes started at 7.30 a.m. When the students and teaching staff including the Principal arrived they were surprised to see a student fast asleep naked only in an underwear on a bed that blocked the entrance gate. It was a strange scene. When people surrounding him started pinching his skin and pulling his hair he got up and ran for his life towards his room to amusement of all gathered there.

T.R. had qualities of leadership and self confidence even as a student. After graduation T.R. took up a job in the Forest Deptt. as a Kuth Supervisor. Being ambitious T.R was not happy with his job and he resigned from Government service. Then he enrolled himself as a Contractor in P.W.D. He did not look back and in a short time he was a leading Class A contractor. Uri Hajipeer road was one of

R.L.SHARMA

B.Sc Engg. (Mech. & Elect.) F.I.E.

Retd. Chief Engineer J&K Govt.

9, Karan Nagar,
Jammu Tawi 180005
Tel : 0191-2573788

his earliest achievements. Subsequently he also became a Forest Lessee in the State. He is self made man with high qualities of head and heart. T.R. is a good student of human psychology and helps people when they need help the most. Much before Dale Carnegie wrote his famous book "How to make friends and win people" T.R. was adept in this art.

Realizing that J & K had limited opportunities he shifted his business activities to Delhi and made a mark in top business circles. After his children were well settled in life and he had achieved financial security for himself and his family he dabbled a little in politics. He was nominated as a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha).

T.R. has been a well known figure in J&K and Delhi. A very successful man in life and he never forgot his old friends and relatives and has been always available to them for advice and help. I wish Tirath ji many more years of healthy and peaceful life ahead.

R.L.Sharma

May 27, 2003

Rohit Khattar, Managing Director
Habitat World

Thank you for considering me a part of your family. It was a privilege & honour to be a part of august gathering to felicitate Amla ji on his 90th birthday. It is his generosity that he considers me as a friend and treats my wife as a daughter.

My association with Amla ji is only about six to seven years old. We met for the first time at medical center as a doctor/patient. He was suffering with high fever and was almost delirious. As is usual I prescribed some medications for him and advised rest. After about a week I was pleasantly surprised when an elderly gentleman walked in the clinic and graciously thanked me for treating him. That was the first time when I was properly introduced and came to know his sincerity as he had come especially to thank me. This unusual quality of graciousness and humbleness in a person who has achieved so much sets him miles apart from contemporary politicians.

The other incidence that comes to my mind is when he called at my home and very diffidently asked me if my ethics permitted me to visit a patient at their home. On further enquiry it turned out that he was worried about Satya ji and wanted a medical consult. It came about that he was worried whether my government service rules permitted home visits or not. This unique capacity to think about others even in a worried frame of mind sets him apart as a caring person.

Over this short period of time another quality that comes to my mind is his extraordinary generosity towards every one who come in his contact in whatever capacity.

I wish I could have more proficiency with words to draw a more comprehensive picture of Sh. Amlaji. I sincerely thank you to give me an opportunity to express my feelings.

With all the best wishes,



SRN Industrial Associates

110-A, Kilokari, New Delhi - 110 014
Telefax : 26340701, 26344819 E-mail : srnindlasso@yahoo.com

Ref. No.

Date 6th March 2005

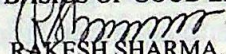
A SMALL TRIBUTE TO MR.T.R. AMLA

MY ENTIRE FAMILY KNOWS BABAJI, THAT IS WHAT WE CALL T.R AMLA JI, FOR THE PAST 5-6 YEARS. OUR ACQUAINTANCE BLOOMED DURING MORNING WALK EVERY DAY WHICH HE NEVER MISSES. THE ONE THING WHICH STRUCK ME ABOUT HIM IS SERENITY, CONTENTMENT AND SAINTLYNESS WHICH ONE SEES ON HIS FACE. YOUR CURIOSITY GETS UNSATISFIED FURTHER WHILE TALKING TO HIM ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SPIRITUAL FIELDS..

HE HAS RISEN FROM BEING AN EMPLOYEE TO THIS HEIGHT BY SHEER HARD WORK AND LADY LUCK AND EXCELLENT HOUSE MANAGEMENT OF HIS WIFE. HE IS A MAN OF STRONG LIKES AND DISLIKES. HIS FAITH IN MATA VAISHNODEVI IS UNQUESTIONABLE AND AS A HUMBLE MAN HE GIVES ENTIRE CREDIT TO MATA FOR HIS SUCCESS AND HAPPYNESS.

LIKE EVERY SUCCESSFUL MAN HE TOO HAS HIS DARK AREAS AND LONELY MOMENTS WHICH HE TRIES TO PASS BY BEING BUSY WHOLE DAY.

MANY TIMES I HAVE HEARD PEOPLE SAYING ABOUT SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE "OH HIS FAME HAS MADE HIM ARROGANT AND HEADY MAN" BUT THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT TRUE ABOUT BABAJI. NO WONDER HIS FAME TOUCHES THE HORIZON BUT WITH IT GOES HIS FEAR FOR GOD I HAVE NEITHER WORDS NOR WORTH TO DESCRIBE HIS COMPLETE PERSONALITY. I PRAY TO ALMIGHTY TO GIVE HIM STRENGTH, COURAGE AND LONGER LIFE SO THAT PEOPLE LIKE US GET STILL MORE TIME WITH HIM TO LEARN BASICS OF GOOD LIFE.


RAKESH SHARMA,
110/1 KILOKRI, NEW DELHI-110014.
MOB—9810086305.
TEL—26340701.

Lala Teerath Ram Amla was born in a rich well connected and respectable family of Muzaffarabad town (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir). He was in Srinagar during the turbulent days of 1947, while other members of his family were trapped in Muzaffarabad. In March 1948, when Indian Red Cross Society brought Hindus rescued from Muzaffarabad to India, they also brought family members and other relatives of Lala Teerath Ram with them. Lalaji brought them to this state, employed them in his business enterprises and also gave some of them partnership and in this way brought them up. Lalaji did his best to get children of these people educated and joining government jobs. Not only this, he also performed the duty of building futures of the youth of all the three regions of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, without any consideration of religion or region. His generosity and compassion is two things to be followed by others. Whoever reached him for help was obliged. The way iron becomes gold as soon as it comes in contact with Paras, in the same way whoever came in contact to Lalaji he found his life comfortable. It is his generosity that his treasures are getting richer day by day. Because law of nature says,

“there is a most notable feature of the treasures of Saraswati
Spend It, it will grow. Don't spend it will vanish”

Lala Teerath Ram did his Matriculation from Government High School Muzaffarabad, F A from Sri Pratap College Srinagar and BA from Lahore. He was interested since his childhood in sports, gymnastic, shooting and hunting. It was perhaps in 1936 that he fought with a tiger on the bank of Kishan Ganga River in Muzaffarabad. Several people standing on both the banks of Kishan Ganga river have seen this brave fighting the tiger and finally killing it.

Lalaji is married to Satya Devi the daughter of Conservator of Forest Sri Bakshi Devi Saran. He has two daughters and a son out of that wedlock.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was arrested in 1953. After his arrest and exile, when he came back to Jammu and Kashmir (perhaps in 1973), Sheikh Sahab with his wife Begum Akbar Jahan went to Manda quarters and stayed there with Lala Teerath Ram. I was introduced to Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla by Teerath Ram. My meeting with Sheikh Sahab was long. This meeting produced Sheikh Abdullah number of my weekly newspaper 'Awami Daur'. My paper was started in 1956. But in July

Ram Lal Verma Muzaffarabdi

1974 it was a first attempt to publish a number full of pictures and full of information regarding the movement and character of Sheikh Abdullah. The number also contained historical events and profile of Sheikh Abdulla along with impressions of his friends and foes. The number was released in a function presided over by the then Chief Minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in newly built BROADWAY HOTEL of Srinagar and released by Sri Inder Kumar Gujral, honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. The first copy of that special number was presented to Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla. All India Radio has covered the event and specially the historical speech of Sheikh Sahab in several language bulletins. Political circles have termed the speech of Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla the first step before entering into mainstream.

Lalaji has played an important role to get Sheikh Abdulla back to power in 1975. He played a quite role in the field of politics. He was for several terms a member of Rajya Sabha where he represented his state.

Lala Teerath Ram Amla is in the true sense of words a man of secular credentials. He is a lover of national integration, pro poor, a good host and fond of good eatings, music and dance. And that is why, he commands respects everywhere in the state. He has a big circle of friends not only in Kashmir or only in India and Pakistan but all over the world.

Lala Teerath has kept his relation with Muzaffarabad community as usual, he guides them in political and religious issues. Since 1960, Lalaji was president of Sri Geeta Mandir Parbandhak Committee, Bakshi Nagar Jammu. This committee was changed to Zila Muzaffarabad, Geeta Mandir Smriti Bhawan (Memorial), committee/trust regd. in January 1989. And now Lala Teerath Ram is life chairman of this social religious trust.

It is a matter of happiness that Lalaji is publishing his autobiography which will show a path for everybody to follow.

My good wishes are with him.

Ram La! Verma Muzaffarabadi
Quarter No. 29,
Mohalla Geeta Mandir,
Bakshi Nagar Jamm~180 001
Phone No. 0191-2586663

NANA

Life is a long journey and as I look at all our relatives, one sees life in all its shades. Lot of moments stand out in this visual kaleidescope, but what is most memorable from NANA's life is his being at its very core, in every moment, with Naani. Always together, always by each other's side, in this most silent of relationships lies perfect harmony, happiness, and the greatest companionship.

Although I have come to know NANA only over the last 15 years, much past his prime, because of my marriage to his granddaughter, Rohini, I have found in his manner a human being of great caring and all the worlds affection. In my early years of getting to know NANA, I most thoroughly enjoyed my conversations with him, with his thoughts about our country, why we achieved what we did, and where we could do more. Having recently returned to India, these were occasions I thoroughly enjoyed and visiting with him was always a pleasure.

Having been witness to so much of our history through the halls of our parliament and having been a confidante of Mrs. Gandhi through her final years, his warnings on the deteriorating situation in Kashmir went unheard. This in my view pained him immensely, and I do believe that on many occasions he seemed to wonder what he could have done or said differently to have averted this situation from deteriorating to the extent that it did.

But on the other hand were a whole host of achievements, including his rise as a completely self made man who, like a banyan tree, loved and cared for all ... immediate relatives, distant relatives, acquaintances and many others throughout his great homeland. And we as a family rest right up there with them all, especially our daughter Vedaa, who has burst into all our lives after thirteen years of marriage and all the blessings from NANA, my late father and Mata Vaishno Devi. He wished for this child much more than us, and to see her with him gives all of us immense, immense joy. In his shadow, I hope she grows up well, and comes into her fullest as a good and caring human being. The maximum time we spent with NANA was last summer in Srinagar and we loved every moment of it. He and Naani are so beautifully cared for by his daughters and son-in-law that each visit was special. He enjoyed his walks, he still enjoyed wearing his formal clothes when important guests visited for dinner, he enjoyed visiting with us at the Palace Hotel for tea, he enjoyed sitting on the porch of the Royal Golf Club as relatives mingled and he contemplated the meaning of life, looking up at the snow covered mountains all around.

It has been a full, full life ... of occasions happy and sad, of many moments of joy and great tenderness, of experiences far and wide, of power and fame, and above all else a family that has loved and revered him for all his love, affection and caring.

Rohit Kapur

Dr. S. L. VERMA

M. D.

CONSULTANT PHYSICIAN
EX-PRINCIPAL/DEAN
PROFESSOR & HEAD DEPTT. OF MEDICINE
GOVT. MEDICAL COLLEGE JAMMU.

RESIDENCE :

15 D A/C GANDHI NAGAR,
(GREEN BELT AREA) JAMMU-180004.
TEL : 432337

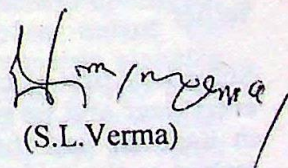
DATE 28.02.2005

L. Tirath Ram ji Amla is a legend in his own right. He has been a philanthropist & a fatherly figure for the poor, downtrodden and the oppressed. A highly accomplished businessman and a friend of friends. He has also taken keen interest in politics and remained Member of Parliament for many years.

During my early childhood in Muzaffarabad sometimes in the late thirties, Lala ji had shot a lion in an old Quila by the side of Krishanganga river in a hand to hand fight. That showed his strength and fearlessness.

I would here mention about his benevolence towards me in shaping my carrier. It was in 1951 when I was selected for MBBS course at Jaipur Medical College by the then Prime minister of the J&K state Janab sheikh Mohd. Abdullah. A loan was also sanctioned subject to a surety by a respectable and well to do person. I had no one to look to being refugee from Muzzafarabad. L Tirath Ram not only stood surety but also assured me of full support in future as well. It was because of him that after doing my MBBS I continued to pursue my M.D course despite Govt.'s notice to the contrary.

With these few words, I wish Lala ji many more useful, healthy and prosperous years.


(S.L.Verma)

June 1964.

I stood by the Dal lake in Srinagar absorbing the grandeur of Nature around me . I was thrilled to be in Kashmir on a professional assignment as a Finance and Tax consultant to Lala Tirath Ram Amla . After, a hard day's work, the beauty of the valley appeased all my senses. However, deep within me there was a feeling of tremendous sadness. I missed my young family and wished I could afford to bring them to Jannate - Kashmir for a holiday. Every evening, I returned to the guesthouse with a heavy heart .

And suddenly one night, the lights came on and shrieks of joy filled the air. I could not believe my eyes when my family- wife and children, tramped into the guesthouse - My cup of joy brimmed over—

Such silent gestures of kindness were characteristic of Lala ji. He had the knack to understand people without words and to move behind the scenes to fulfill their needs. That summer, Lala ji's generosity to me and my family overwhelmed me and I pledged my undying loyalty to him. But Lalaji did not stop at that. While I did my best to fulfill my role as a professional consultant , he became my friend, confidant and advisor on all other matters. Orphaned at an early age, I had struggled and braved life's battles alone. Lala ji made me feel I had finally come home. It was a relief to finally have a shoulder to lean on and a wise head to guide me. My children grew up to call him Papaji - an affectionate term reserved for 'father' .

Since that first summer in 1964, I hired a summer home in Pahalgam every year and we all spent idyllic holidays there . Every moment spent in Kashmir and the time spent with Lala ji and his family will remain etched as the golden period of my life.

I still remember the long evenings gathered around the fire place . Music flowed with shairi and an abundance of wine and delicious food . -Hum piyala - hum nivala -----.

It was not all fun and games. Lala ji was one of the few who was genuinely concerned with the growth and prosperity of the valley and the community. He would go to any lengths to provide jobs and food to those who came to him. He had grand visions of establishing world class schools, colleges, hotels and industries in the valley. He was the moving spirit behind Broadway Hotel- one of Srinagar's finest hotels providing world class ambience. He set up Jammu Motors and numerous other ventures to bring the best products from premier industrial groups like Godrej, Premier, and Mahindra to the valley. However, the bureaucratic delays and obstacles in every venture irked him. This is what prompted him to join politics as he felt that he could be more effective with the power of the government behind him. However, he preferred to stay in the shadows. D.P. Dhar was the more vocal and visible form of Lala ji's ideals. Our core group of friends shared a common enthusiasm to make a difference to the nation. Often, the days rolled into nights as we debated and discussed serious issues of development, commerce, economics and politics at the local and at the national level. The coterie of fine minds- Lalaji, D.P. Dhar, Sonam Narbou proved a good foil for each other. I felt a deep sense of satisfaction at being a part of a core thinking group which had the power to make an impact in the world.

Perhaps, the greatest learning for me was when I watched Lala ji coping with crisis after crisis with a unique calm. Nothing came on a platter to him. As his business advisor, I worked closely with him and was inspired by him. He toiled hard for the name, fame and fortune he created. He went through a series of personal and business upheavals. While I did my best to stand by him, I know that he often walked the battle lines alone. His sharp sense of foresight and strategic planning was his forte. In addition, he had the tremendous courage to take risks and the wisdom to cut his losses at the right time and move forward in another direction. His undying optimism and resilience was the secret of his success.

Lala ji's friendship has been the most enriching experience of my life. The long road that we have traveled together has brought its share of twists and turns. Our bonding and mutual respect has strengthened with time. I feel honored and humbled to have known him. True Friends are a precious gift given only to the lucky few who know how to treasure them.

Lala Ji is a true Kashmiri. He has his intimate connections with the Kashmiri families who are trying to sustain good old Kashmiriat. At his house, Kashmiri people come with their problems. He makes every effort to explain in simple language and hear their difficulties. His approach to reach the minds of those simple folks is both exhaustive and exhilarating. Even in the inaccessible areas his name is a household word. Even the illiterate villagers who come to him find sympathy and guidance even those dissatisfied with his party and the state Government. Their devotion to Lalaji is unshakable. Anybody with any problem can come and talk with Lalaji. He would converse with the ordinary people in Kashmir diction as he was born and brought up in Kashmir.

His wife Satya Ji, has played an important role in his life. Lalaji never succumbed to any seductive temptation and always expressed his simple thoughts with bold conviction. He appealed to the Kashmiri Pandits (who fled to Delhi and other parts of India) to avoid panicky flights. He had dream and a vision to see Kashmir as a haven of peace. His loyalty to the Kashmiri people and their culture was deeply embedded in his mind. For him the bond between India and Kashmir is indispensable. He is a man of great intellect, a sweeping vision, a wielder of words without ambiguity and circumlocution. I have never seen Lal ji losing his temper. The faith in the unity of Kashmir and its future animated Lalaji's vision of the State. He served the Congress, India's dominant party

S. R. Dinodia

B.Com. (Gold Medallist) LL.B., F.C.A.
Chartered Accountant

Res :A-9, Maharani Bagh
New Delhi - 110065

S. R. Dinodia & Co.
Chartered Accountants
Head Office :
C-37, Connaught Place
New Delhi - 110 001
Ph. 23417692, 23415272

Audit division :
K-39, Connaught Circus,
New Delhi - 110 001
Ph. 23418016, 23417630
Fax : (011) 51513666

for decades and sought to promote a politics based on secular relationship with Kashmiri.

In 1989, Lal Ji had to shift to Delhi from Kashmir leaving a palatial house and rented a small bedroom house in Delhi. But he never bore any grudge for anybody. He was happy in his simple house. Even in the changed circumstances, he was very calm. During the past ten years, he has worked silently for peace in Kashmir. After all the situation could change and he could return to his homeland. His dream of peace in Kashmir may come true. He would live in peace thereafter. May god give him long life to strive for the prosperity of his birth place.

S. R. Dinodia

18 April, 2004

Web site : www.srdinodia.com
Email : srdinodia@srdinodia.com

Saradindu Mitra

Dear Uncle Tirathji,

It's our great pleasure to know about your autobiography. You are a self-made man with full of affection and vast experience. All your readers will surely be happy to read this book.

We have many loving memories with you over here. We wish you all the best with good health and good luck. May God shower His kind blessings all time to you and your family.

Yours affectionately,

Saradindu, Silvia and family from Switzerland

.....

TIRATHRAM-EPIISODES

Cow watching - a peace of mind

Tirathji wanted to see Swiss cows ! I saw them very often on some fields. So I took Tirathji in our car and drove to many areas. But I had tough time to find any cow on the field. After about half an hour of driving, we found a couple of them grazing on the field. I parked the car near a cow and Tirathji went out to have a close look at the Swiss cow. For about half an hour he was standing near the cow. I was taking rest in the car after an exhaustion of cow searching. Both of us were satisfying our peace of mind - one by watching the cow and the other by resting !

"Kisikato hojavega"

Once I took Tirathji in a super-market. He was buying so many articles without much thinking. When he picked up a few morning-gowns and some boots for ladies, I asked him about the sizes. He told me, "Kisikato hojavega" (to someones they will suit).

Crane to build small houses ?

Once Tirathji wanted to go for a morning walk absolutely alone. It was an early morning of a Sunday. The Swiss streets were nearly empty. He told me that he would come after half an hour. When he didn't return after forty minutes, we started worrying. I went out to search him. After about an hour, I saw him coming nearly exhausted. But both of us were happy. He told me, " Saradindu, while walking I marked a tall crane to locate your flat. But on my way back, I saw many of them and I got confused. For constructing a small house, you even need here a big crane".

Lemon Episode !

We were arranging once an Indian dinner. Silvia gave me a plate with full of some fresh vegetables. I kept the plate on the dining table. After a while, I didn't see any fresh lemon pieces on the plate. Assuming Silvia might have forgotten, I asked her to put some fresh lemon pieces too. She was surprised because she did put them earlier. Anyway, she kept some pieces (again as per her thought). When the lunch was served, I went out to the balcony to call Tirathji. I was surprised to see him sitting there in a chair and enjoying eating those fresh lemon pieces. Those pieces were the first served-ones from Silvia. She was blaming me for loosing those pieces and I was blaming her for her forgetfulness. It was Tirathji who was enjoying those pieces and later we all three enjoyed that "Lemon Episode".

Sat Paul Sahni

Former Director General
Information, Public Relations & Tourism Publicity
Jammu & Kashmir Govt.

☎ : 0191-433044
20-A, D/C, Gandhi Nagar,
Jammu-180 004

Dated May 7, 2004

Dear Rohit,

Before I decided to write to you, I was at a loss for I did not know how to address you--as Mr. Khattar or Rohit. I opted for the latter because not only that I know Vijay and knew Ramesh but also knew your Dadda and Daddi very well during their stay in Kashmir. And of course, I have known your Nanna and Nanni all my life.

I have not seen you after you grew up but I have kept myself informed of your ascent up the steps of success. By your hard work and focussed attention you have not only established yourself in hospitality industry but also made a name abroad in this highly competitive world. This is highly appreciable.

When Chacha told me of your Project to compile, produce and publish a book about him, I liked and appreciated it. When I was asked to write a piece on my reminiscences, I was at a loss because all I know about Chacha would need a long chapter. However, in the enclosed piece I have encapsulated more than 60 years and tried to portray his personality, his nature, his human qualities, his commitment, values he holds high his secular outlook and his contribution to public life. Whether I have done him justice or not is for others to judge. What do you think !!! I would like to hear your comments since you know your Grandpa so well. I am enclosing a photograph of his taken on his 91st Birthday, to go with the piece.

With affectionate regards,

Mr. Rohit Khattar,
F-3, Maharani Bagh,
New Delhi-110 065

Encl: as above.

*Yours
Sat Paul Sahni*

Sat Paul Sahni

Former Director General
Information, Public Relations & Tourism Publicity
Jammu & Kashmir Govt.

☎ : 0191-433044
20-A, D/C, Gandhi Nagar,
Jammu-180 004

Tirath Ram Amla is best known as "Tirath Chacha" among his large circle of close friends. He is called "Chacha"--father's brother--because all such individuals to whom he has showered his unlimited affection and lavish hospitality over past five to six decades, have received from him care and regard in ample measure.

His qualities as a human being are a class in themselves. When it came to giving succour or assistance his friendship with high and mighty did not hold him back. He has helped not only his friends and associates but also those who happened to be on the other side of the divide but had sought his assistance. There are numerous instances where his friend-ship and social relations transcended his political differences. In the turbulent times of fifties and sixties in Jammu & Kashmir he had friends in all political groupings like National Conference, Democratic National Conference(DNC), Indian National Congress, Plebiscite Front, Janta Party. Though being in National Conference, DNC and Congress at different times, he kept his channels open with all the opposition groupings.

His role in the formation of DNC--who broke away from the Bakshi-dominated ruling National Conference in the fifties--and later its return to the parent fold, was not only important but crucial. Required inputs for floating DNC largely came from and through "Chacha".

The historic role that he played in making the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi on one hand and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah then in political wilderness, on the other, to agree to start negotiations for a political settlement, is considered one crucial turning point in contemporary history of not only of Jammu & Kashmir but also of India. Both the leaders were appreciative of his "quiet diplomacy".

Deep understanding that he developed and strong friendship that he enjoyed with D.P.Dhar and also with Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq and Girdhari Lal Dogra allowed him to play very crucial political role in the Jammu & Kashmir State.

His involvement in matters political did not result in neglect of his diverse business empire ranging from forests to hotels, cinemas to automobiles, real estate to manufacturers representation. During this period he also built up deep family friendship with leading industrialists on one hand and with leaders of political parties of

Sat Paul Sahni

Former Director General
Information, Public Relations & Tourism Publicity
Jammu & Kashmir Govt.

☎ : 0191-433044
20-A, D/C, Gandhi Nagar,
Jammu-180 004

different hues. Personal relations always transcended his political differences. But this didnot land him ever in any political, controversy. He has gathered enough political experience and has developed art of manouverability to a level where he successfully keeps himself above petty considerations and political skirmishes.

Before he got involved in serious politics and big business, through his amiable disposition, easy accessibility and obliging nature, he became an important member of Srinagar's social elite. His wife Satya and he were frequent hosts for joyful get-togethers and convivial parties. They were permanent invitees to chain of parties that were feature of Srinagar's social life in the 1950s. 'Chacha's large circle of friends included: Pestonjeees--Behram and "Aunty"; Sonis--Bimla and Prem; D.P.Dhar; Bals--Rajan, Mohinder and Prakash; Agas--Aleema and Muzzafar; Kapoors--Lalita and Balwant; Sahnis--Prem, Sati and Nimmi; Nedous--Saleema and Harry; Rainas--Shanta and Srikanth; Agas--Nuzzat and Nasir; Khattars--Shanti and Roshan; Chopras--Shyam and Bach; Kidwais--Aziza and Midat.

He enjoyed for many years confidence of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and because of that, the Amla children had access to the Gandhi family and friendships at different levels developed over a period. His son-in-law Vijay Dhar became an influential member of the circle which was close to Indira Gandhi, His son Krishan was a confidant and a close friend of Rajiv. He continues to enjoy the confidence of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. Krishan is presently Treasurer of J&K Pradesh Congress Committee, just as Tirath Chacha was many years ago.

"Lalla ji" as most of Kashmiris know him, is a fervent exponent of Kashmir's composite culture and way of life. At home in winter, he and Krishan both feel comfortable in "pheran"--loose Kashmiri gown of homespun woolen. Their residence in Srinagar is a classic example of good intergeration of practical modern requirements and Kashmir architecture in traditional way. It has lot of woodwork and wooden floors. His Jammu residence also has incorporated indigenous architectural designs. The Broadway Cinema at Srinagar has typical Kashmiri architecture. The Broadway Hotel at Srinagar has local architecture married with modern amenities and facilities. In it extensive use has been made of local timber and woodwork as also of crewl embroidery having typical Kashmiri motifs. The ceilings of guest rooms and common facilities mostly

Sat Paul Sahni

Former Director General

Information, Public Relations & Tourism Publicity

Jammu & Kashmir Govt.

☎: 0191-433044

20-A, D/C, Gandhi Nagar,

Jammu-180 004

have typically Kashmiri handcrafted woodbased Khatamband.

The highly rated Kashmiri cusine--Waazwan--was made by him, integral part of food service in Broadway Hotel, Srinagar. This helped make Waazwan popular not only with guests from other parts of the country but also foreign tourists. The tradition was carried on by Krishan and now by his grandsons from Delhi to London.

Tirath Chacha thus embodies in him the essence of composite culture of Kashmir and is a true representative of secular concept of Kashmiryat which took centuries to evolve.

When I called on him on April 13, 2004 to wish him good health on his 91st Birthday, he was alert, cheerful and full of same wit and humour which had made him popular in younger years. This is amply borne by the photograph that I took that day.

Sat Paul Sahni

DENTAL REMEDIES

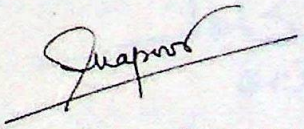
B-215, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi-44
Tel. : 26977475, 30977475

My first encounter with Mr Tirath Ram Amla goes back to 2001, though it was the turn of the century, to me it appears it was the turn of my fortune. It did Shift the citadel of life while I took an excursion from wilderness to the path of life.

He is a great person in whom one can see a perfect balance of divine fatherhood and blending qualities of a good teacher as well as a guide. Mr Amla by his vast experience can transform and mould the character of a person. He is a disciplined master motivated by selflessness and unconditional love and is a tremendous source of inspiration for many youngsters and is always surcharged with enthusiasm to live a good disciplined life and has a good spiritual dedication towards "MATA"

He has always shown tremendous amount of patience and forbearance towards any shortcomings in the treatment rendered to him

It was my good luck and destiny to have been in association with this great man for the past five years as his confidence boosting habit guided me in my troublesome days and though he was my patient, it always appeared as if he was the guiding soul and we had reversed roles such is his dynamic personality.


(Dr. SHARAD KAPOOR)

SONIA GANDHI
LEADER OF OPPOSITION
(LOK SABHA)



D.O. No. 2787/LOP/LS/2003

44, PARLIAMENT HOUSE
NEW DELHI - 110 001
PHONE : 3017470, 3034285

10, JANPATH
NEW DELHI - 110 011
PHONE : 3014481, 3015584
FAX : 3018651

April 17, 2003
21

Dear Shri Amla,

Thank you for your letter of April 12, 2003 and the invitation to celebrate your 90th birthday on 21st April. I send my congratulations to you on this occasion and convey my good wishes for your well-being and happiness for many more years to come. I too have fond memories of your long association with Indiraji and Rajivji and your good wishes and support are always a source of inspiration.

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Shri Tirath Ram Amla
Former Member of Parliament
F-3, Maharani Bagh
New Delhi - 110 065

S. C. AMLA

Chief Engineer (Mech.) (Retd.)
M.E.D. Public Works Department,
Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir.

137/138, Bakshi Nagar
Jammu Tawi -180001
Phone: 0191-2582822

Dated: 27th Feb. 2005

Message

It is a matter of great pleasure and pride for me to know that a book is being published on the life of L. Tirath Ram Amla, Ex. Member Parliament (Rajya Sabha) from Jammu And Kashmir State.

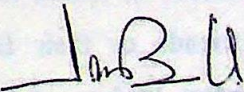
"Lala Sahib" as he is popularly known in the political and social circle in J&K, hails from Muzaffarabad P.O.K. He excelled as a leading forest lessee, a prominent hotelier and a businessman, a social worker and above all a great person.

He is the oldest politician of the J&K state having represented J&K State as Member Parliament (Rajya Sabha) for more than two decades. He has been associated with all the political leaders and top personalities of the state and centre and played a key & important role in the state politics.

Besides being a politicians and a successful businessman, he is a great visionary, religious minded, very kind hearted, caring, loving & a dynamic personality. His concern, contribution and support to his family and the displaced people of Muzaffarabad community in particular after the partition of 1947 is unforgettable.

I have had the privilege of being associated with him since my childhood when I was studying in the school and college at Srinagar, and I am lucky enough to have his blessings and guidance from time to time in shaping my career and personality.

I send my greetings and good wishes on the occasion of the publication of Autobiography, and pray to god for his good health and long life.


(S. C. AMLA)

MY TRIBUTES TO LALA TIRATH RAM AMLA

I have known Lala Tirath Ram Amla for the last 55 years. I hold him in great respect. I and many of my friends like late D.P. Dhar, Makhan Lal Fotedar and Mufti Mohd. Sayeed used to call him "Chacha". He is a very generous and large hearted person and a very honest and self-made businessman.

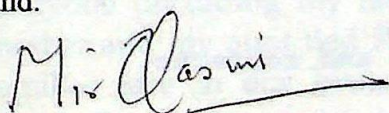
For some time in the past he used to be a Forest Contractor, but I remember very well, he never approached the Government for any undue favour, though he had many friends in the J&K Cabinet. He had wide contacts in the valley especially with the well-known persons like late Shri G.M. Chikan and Dr. Ali Jan. If I remember correctly, I came in touch with him through late Mr. M.A. Beig, the then Revenue Minister some time in 1950. He was a great friend of Mr. Beig. I quite distinctly remember that when Mr. Beig was arrested in 1953, Mr. Amla did his best to look after formers' family. One day when Mr. Beig was in jail his wife fell seriously ill. She sent her former driver Ama Khan to Tirath jee with the message that she was ill and was badly in need of medical aid. Tirath jee immediately took Dr. Ali Jan with him to the ailing lady and provided necessary medicines. It shows that Tirath jee would not give up looking after his friends or their families when they were in adversity. All important leaders of Kashmir like Sheikh Sahib, Sadiq Sahib and Dogra Sahib had great regard and respects for him. However, he was not liked by Bakshi Ghulam Mohd., the then Prime Minister of J&K State. Shrimati Indira Gandhi valued his advice and opinion about politics and trends in Kashmir. He was a Member of Parliament for

Syed Mir Qasim

Barzula Srinagar,
Kashmir
Tel. 2431503

6, Lodhi Estate,
New Delhi-110003
Tel. 24692641

21 years. This itself speaks about his political acumen. We cannot forget his contribution to DNC. In 1957, Sadiq Sahib, myself, Dogra Sahib, D.P. Dhar and Mir Lasjan refused to join the cabinet because there were rumors about Bakshi Ghulam Mohd.'s corruption and high handedness in dealing with Law & Order situation. Even Pt. Nehru came and advised us not to form Democratic National Conference. But Lala Tirath Ram appreciated our stand and supported us in all manners. He looked after workers of DNC financially. He also helped Sadiq Sahib and myself financially as much as it was needed. His Broadway Hotel at Delhi served as a free guest house for leaders and workers of DNC. Apart from helping financially he helped us in our political work quite a lot. He always clearly understood the various political trends in the state and his judgment was mostly sound.



(SYED MIR QASIM)

Former Chief Minister of J&K State

Date : March 08, 2004



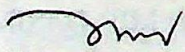
Message

I am glad to learn that an autobiography of Lala Tirath Ram Ji Amla is being published.

Lala Sahib is a well known philanthropist, freedom fighter and respectable businessman and a prominent political figure of Jammu & Kashmir State who remained Member Parliament (Rajya Sabha) for quite a long time. He has contributed a lot in the state politics and played an important role in building State-Centre relations.

I had heard a lot about him but actually came into contact with him in the year 1997 when my daughter got married in the AMLA family. I was very much impressed by his personality and his positive attitude towards life. He is a fountain of knowledge and experience. He is full of energy even at this age. He is so caring which I came to know when I underwent Heart Bypass surgery in 2002. He is politically and socially well connected and socialite that he helps and visits the needy patients in almost all the Hospitals/ Nursing Homes of Delhi regularly.

I send him my regards and respects.


(VINOD SACHDEVA)
Chairman
Monalisa Group

ہزاروں سال نرگس اپنی بے نوزی پہ روتی ہے۔ بڑی مشکل سے ہوتا ہے چمن میں دیدہ ور پیدا۔

Hazaaron saal nargis apni benoori pe roti hai

Badi mushkil se hota hai chaman mein dedaawar paida...

...

"Rarely is a human being born who is appreciated and who appreciates others to this extent. Shri Tirath Ram Amla is one such person who has always known the value of 'good'. He has never missed an opportunity to do good.

I joined a new school in sixth class and my classmate was a plump girl whose name was Vijay and I was told she was the daughter of Mr. Tirath Ram Amla, who in turn was a good friend of my father the late Mr. D.P. Dhar. That was my first introduction to the name "Tirath Ram Amla". Then I joined another school I was introduced to the second daughter named Kiran who has played a very important role in my life since.

In the course of my growing up Mr. Tirath Ram Amla was omnipresent & I used to address him as Chachaji (the name had come to be revered in our house). Later I found that everyone (including my father) called him 'Chacha'. My mother and my aunt tied Rakhi on him and he became a familiar face in our house. My formal introduction to Chachaji's greatness was when my mother was critically ill and the only probability of saving her life was an operation by a German doctor. My father and the greats like Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad failed to persuade the doctor since the tumour was too large to handle. Finally it was left to my father's friend Mr. Tirath Ram Amla who moved my mother to the care of Dr. Berkowitz at the Military Hospital, Rainawari. The operation was fixed immediately as it was an emergency. My father was not available to give a 'no claim' certificate. They refused my signature as I was too young. So

I went crying to Chachaji. He held me to his chest and said not to worry and took the onus on himself and signed the 'no claim' and today my mother is alive because of his gesture. He may not be God but he was God-sent.

When I entered the society I was crushed between two huge names - my father D.P. Dhar and Tirath Ram Amla (Chachaji). Whatever I am today is because of these two people. When I fell in love with Chachaji's favourite younger daughter Kiran, I was a nobody and I expected a 'No' for an answer from my father-in-law to be. When he said 'yes' both Kiran and I were happy and surprised. We asked him 'why' later and he gave us his story of how he fell in love with Satya his wife who was deaf and dumb. Their love for each other is an example for everyone. His love for her made him learn how to communicate with her. I do not remember an outing or a function where she did accompany him. Till date Satya (we all call her Mummy) has been part of our good and bad. Because of Chachaji, mummy's handicap has become a virtue. Mummy has given me as much affection as she has to her son Krishan or to her daughter Vijay, (the same plump girl in school who introduced me to the name Tirath Ram Amla) and from day one Vijay has played a very important role in Kiran's and my life. Initially in our marriage Vijay played the role of a mother-in-law and now she only plays a role of a dominating mother. She has always been a great favourite of the father.

I met Krishan, Chachaji's son in school. As friends we did lots of things together. After my marriage my first job was with Krishan and Chachaji who I was to call as Papaji. Krishan was far ahead of me in competence and business. He had been grilled by the best teacher. We both had to learn a lot from the patriarch. Krishan and I had to give our work report individually. At work I would get the same firing as Krishan got. At home Krishan was always the son and I was the son-in-law which was understandable. At home Papaji had to

please me more. Papaji was tough. He was self made man and a perfectionist. He wanted everything to be done yesterday and it was difficult to please him. The qualities one would like to learn from him are first his 'vision', second 'humility' and above all 'courage.' No school could have taught us better on these three topics than what I learnt from Papaji. I have been witness to scenes where I saw Papaji sitting in comfort with the greats like Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, D.P. Dhar etc. and later with Smt. Indira Gandhi. That was his courage and he always stuck to his conviction. At work he would discuss construction with mason Haji Jamala, carpenter Wasta Rasoola and make me and Krishan sit and sip salt tea in their company. That was his humility. He built the first modern hotel in Delhi way back in 1954 (that is where the name Broadway was born). When Hotel Broadway, Srinagar, was being built he insisted it to be centrally heated. This Hotel became the first centrally heated hotel in the country that was his 'vision'.

At work he was tough and strict. At home he was at ease with his grand children. He would rattle off story after story. How he killed a leopard with his bare hands. How his father used to make him wash his clothes on the bank of Krishan Ganga in Muzaffarabad. It is a pity none of the grand children have learnt how to wash their own clothes. He would have all the children awed by narrating his experiences. How he would carry a sackful of flour across the river for miles to earn equivalent of 0.50 paisa. He has never forgotten his humble beginning and has always been proud of it.

For him his father was a great inspiration. For us Tirath Ram Amla/Chachaji/Papaji is and has been a great inspiration. It is wonderful to seek his advice knowing fully well he will give you the correct advice. Somehow he has always been right.

I must add choked with emotions that whatever I have written has been inspired by Papaji's grandson Rohit. To me he is like my own son. Rohit's name always makes you touch wood. I wish every mother has a son like him and every grand-father dotes on his grand child like Papaji does. It has been a great relationship between the two. A relationship of just love. What I may have missed learning from Papaji I am beginning to learn from my son Rohit. Papaji has always dominated all of us and it gives me sadistic pleasure that he is also being dominated by two people - Mummy and Rohit. No one for him can come anywhere nearer than Mummy or Rohit.

Today it is a delight to sit with this young man of 93 years and listen to him reciting Ghalib (which he knew a lot once upon a time). He tells us he wanted to be an actor and K.L. Sehgal dissuaded him so he could not become a film hero. But he did become a hero in Parliament where he spent twenty one years. Do you know our Papaji wanted to join the army and if his domination is anything to go by he would have disciplined our armed forces a little more. He probably refused the Army because they did not agree to make him General on the day of joining. He was impatient always.

I could go on with instances and anecdotes showing the incredible nature of our Papaji. Since I had touched upon the incident of my mother being healed by Dr. Berkowitz let me tell you now about the bond between Dr. Berkowitz and Papaji. The Doctor was a German Jew who had escaped the horror of one of the Nazi concentration camps. Soon after his arrival in Srinagar (after a six month stint at the famous Missionary Hospital in Vellore), the Doctor acquired great fame as a skilled surgeon. At least once in a week Dr. Berkowitz would drop in Papaji's office located at the Residency Road and enjoy tea and kababs and they became very close friends.

One day Dr. Berkowitz came to Papaji's office. He was pale and shaking. He told Papaji that he had been diagnosed as suffering from Cancer of the Stomach and as such would like to go to Vellore without any delay. Without a moment's hesitation Papaji offered to take the Doctor himself for treatment to Vellore. Next day both of them flew to Vellore where he stayed with the Doctor for almost a week. After a few days Dr. Berkowitz too was flown back to Srinagar as per his wish because it was found that his disease was incurable and he wanted to return to his beloved Valley. Not long after his return, the Doctor expired and lies buried at Sheikh Bagh, Srinagar.

During the Doctor's illness Papaji would visit him every day and spend long hours trying to comfort him. Before his death, the Doctor told him that he was convinced that both of them had been "*Brother Bhikshus*" many many '*Janmas*' back. As a parting gift he presented to Papaji his ring which had been in his family for generations.

I could just write a one-line biography of Papaji. You are the greatest. You have great children. You have greater grand children and even greater great grand children. May they all have your blessings and may Mata Vaishno Devi give you a long and healthy life. You and Mummy will always be precious to all of us.

WANGDUS KALON
1542, Sector-29
Arun Vihar, NOIDA (U.P.)
Phone: 95120-2451454

Lala Tirath Ram ji Amla

You meet a man for the first time in your life and after exchange of pleasantries throws a poser point blank at you 'How much do they pay you as an officer in the Indian Army'? The concern was genuine and well intended as I discovered later, since I was to marry his best friend's daughter 'Deskrit'. This was in Assam on a tea-Estate in the fall of 1973 where my prospective father in law, late Shri Sonbam Norbu had persuaded his best friend, Shri Tirath Ram Amla to accompany him to deliver the final verdict on the potentials of a 'prospective' son-in-law. Such was the bonding and mutual trust reposed in each other between these two friends.

At a personal level I have had the privilege of knowing Uncle Tirath as a member of the inner circle of his family for a quarter of a century.

Over the years one thing that touched and impressed me the most is his concern, care and love for his physically challenged wife 'Satya Auntie' as we affectionately know her. I do not recall a single family gathering or a social occasion where Satya Auntie was not present. On such occasions Uncle took care to keep her fully informed about family and social affairs.

Above all Lalaji had over a period of time developed a special sign language not only to communicate and converse with Auntie but share jokes and recall time, place and events of bygone decades.

To a mere spectator the sight of the couple laughing together was simply overwhelming to say the least: - A remarkable experience of 'un-conditional love' in action.

Today, Lalaji a man in his nineties is one of the 'grand old man of Kashmir' who has left his permanent imprint on the Socio-political and Economic History of J & K State.

4th March, 2005

WANGDUS KALON